

JOHN, *The* INTER- PRETER *of* CHRIST

St. John and His Writings

CHARLES HERBERT MORGAN

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ST. JOHN AND HIS WRITINGS

BY

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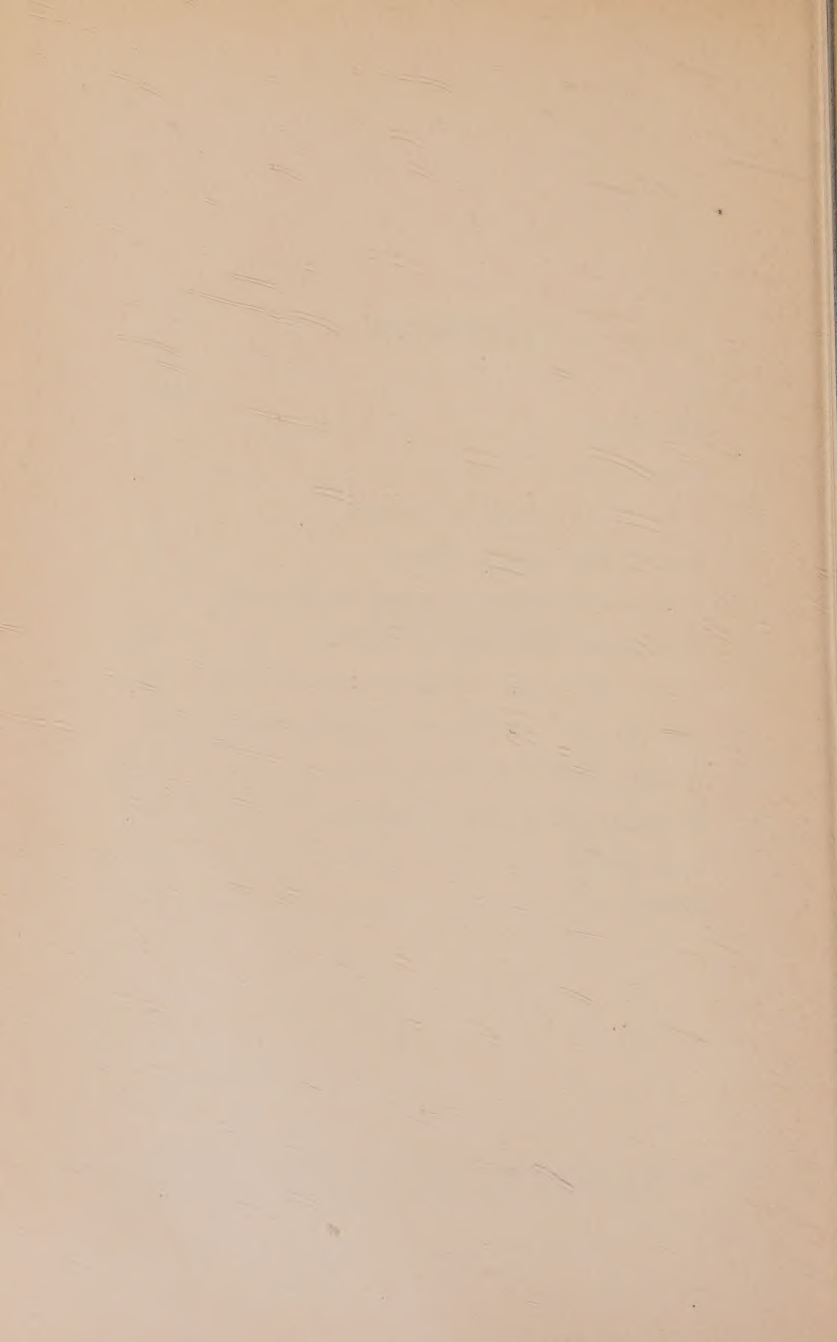
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TO MY WIFE

VICTORIA WELLMAN MORGAN

MY CONSTANT INSPIRATION AND HELP
WHO UNITES HER INTERCESSION WITH MINE
THAT THIS BOOK MAY BE A GUIDE
TOWARD GOD AND LOVE AND CHRISTLIKE
CHARACTER TO ALL WHO STUDY OR READ IT

INTRODUCTION

The vital idea contained in the title of this book is one that has commended itself to a multitude of Christian students and writers. Far more fully than any of the other apostles or New Testament authors, John is an *interpreter* of the inmost life and thought of Jesus Christ. This is the key to his work.

No student should feel that it is hard to understand just what is meant by this word "interpreter." One who interprets written or spoken language first takes into his own mind the meaning of certain matter as given in one language and then seeks to express the same facts and ideas in another language. This is the primary sense of the word. Then, by an easy step, it is applied to the service of a person who is able to perceive what inheres in something beautiful, profound, or difficult, and to bring it out so that others can grasp it. Thus Ruskin, when Turner was a comparatively unknown painter, interpreted him till a wide circle awoke to the worth of his brilliant artistic creations. Likewise Browning especially has called for interpretation among the poets; Wagner, among the musicians; Kant, among the philosophers.

Herein is the chief distinction between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptic Gospels. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are, in a large sense, chron-

icles ; the Fourth Gospel is a new presentation or interpretation of Christ by one who had brooded for many years over his early knowledge of his Master, while constantly communing with that Master in his heart and preaching him with his lips. The Synoptics represent the common body of deeds and sayings of Christ remembered and taught by the apostles and then committed to writing. They embody the *united memory* of our Lord by the first generation of Christians. John, on the other hand, represents in his writings, *personal memory plus meditation*, and gives the results of such memory and meditation after two generations of Christians have passed. John, because his was a personal memory of Christ, could be selective. He therefore omits a large part of the matter given by the Synoptics, it being unnecessary to repeat it, and brings out a new side of Christ's life and discourses, that largely associated with Judea and Jerusalem. At the same time, because of John's long life of meditation, the words of Christ and the whole aspect of his nature, character, and work have entered deeply into the soul of the apostle, and when they come forth in his writings they bear the personal stamp of the medium through which they have passed. It is especially in this respect that the beloved disciple is the Master's interpreter, and herein his Gospel becomes of such immeasurable value. Because John was the man who appears by his nature to have been nearest to Christ and most in sympathy with his purpose, and because he was in himself a man of such transcendent

spiritual genius and sensibility, his Gospel becomes in a large degree the final revelation. As Jesus in the fourteenth chapter of this Gospel says to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," so we may say, he that sees the portrait of Christ in this Gospel has seen the utmost that mortal words can tell of him who is "the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

For the picture of Christ in the Gospel of John may be likened to a wonderful *portrait*, while the accounts of Christ in the other Gospels may be compared to *photographs*. A photograph represents a person's aspect at a particular moment, but a portrait, if made by a great artist, represents the very essence of the person as seen by the artist through many moods and moments. Is a portrait then true to life? Yes, often far truer to life than the instant literalism of the photograph. It catches and fixes upon the canvas larger, more sacred and more intimate truth, for it is made through the medium of a sensitive soul instead of a sensitive plate and the insensate sunlight. So a thoughtful writer has said that it would "require much confidence to have one's portrait painted by a great artist."

But how marvelously our Master stands the test of being painted or interpreted by this artist who had first lived at his side for three years, and then communed with him in spirit for perhaps sixty years! John's final signature to his portrait seems to be contained in these words: "That which we have seen with our

eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of life, and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:1, 2).

As Professor James Drummond says of the Gospel of John in words which were seen after the foregoing was written: "The book is religious, giving us, not a photograph, but an interpretation of a great life; and it is more important for us to understand the inner meaning of Christ's message to the world, and to hear with the spirit his words of life and consolation, than to know the precise phrase which once for a moment ruffled the air of Palestine." "This Gospel supplements the others, not so much by correcting or amplifying their record, as by tracing the eternal laws of spiritual life which they exemplify, and bringing the life of Christ into its world-wide relation."¹

John gave yet another interpretation of his Master—the "living epistle" of his own serene and exalted Christian character. So may it be the aspiration of each reader and student of this volume to become, in his or her measure, an interpreter of Christ to others by life and testimony. We are to study John as an interpreter in this twofold relation, first, of his own life and character, and, then, of his writings.

Those who wish to read a short daily portion of this

¹James Drummond, *The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, 41, 66.

book and to accompany it with the corresponding selected passage of Scripture will find each chapter marked off into seven numbered sections by numbers in brackets, designating one for each day of the week. On the back of the half-title for each chapter and facing the first page are the seven Daily Readings from the Bible material related to the chapter marked with corresponding numbers in brackets.

Scripture quotations are from the American Revised Version, which is the preferred text to be used as far as practicable. Those who do not have a Bible or New Testament in this version can obtain a copy of the New Testament at a low rate from the American Bible Society.¹

This book now invites you into a realm wherein is presented a unique Christian nature, mystic, deep, divinely attuned, yet ever desiring that all may know with him the immeasurable riches of life manifested in Christ. After seeking to penetrate to the heart of what he wrote, his threefold gift to the Church for all time, the author would acknowledge that he has here found unfoldings of truth beyond his power to compass. Yet he may have marked out simple trails to the treasure. If the reader and student will follow the lead of each of the subheadings, there will result a new acquaintance with St. John and his writings.

CHARLES HERBERT MORGAN.

Greater New York, *March* 10, 1921.

¹New Testament, American Revised Version (3 $\frac{3}{8}$ x4 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches, cloth, red edges). American Bible Society, Bible House, New York City. Price, 20 cents; including postage, 23 cents.

JOHN IN THE SETTING OF SCRIPTURE

1. A Supremely Attractive Subject
2. John in the Synoptic Gospels
3. John in the Personal Allusions of the Fourth Gospel
4. John in the Book of Acts
5. John in the Light of the Pauline Epistles
6. John Disclosed as Author of the Johannine Writings

DAILY READINGS

- [1] John 1:35-51
- [2] Mark 10:35-45
- [3] John 2:43-51
- [4] John 18:15, 16; 20:1-8
- [5] Acts 3:1-10; 8:14-17
- [6] Gal. 2:1-10
- [7] Rev. 1:1-11

CHAPTER I

JOHN IN THE SETTING OF SCRIPTURE

[1]

1. A Supremely Attractive Subject

Proof of Jesus' Humanity Perhaps there is no finer proof of Jesus' complete participation in the normal life of mankind than the disclosure in the Fourth Gospel that there was one of his disciples for whom he felt a peculiar love such as was called forth by no other. This fact at once dispels that mystical atmosphere of unreality with which we are apt to envelop our Lord, and makes him one with us. For there is nothing more characteristic of actual human life than these personal attractions toward a nature that has kinship with our own. It may not be possible fully to explain what causes this going out of one nature toward another, but it seems in the high moral and religious sphere in which both Jesus and John moved to be due to a certain likeness of spirit. As one string takes up the vibration of another when they are keyed to the same or a similar wave-length, so one heart responds to another when there is a likeness of endowment, a similarity of purpose, and a unity of ideals. We therefore turn our gaze upon John with the most

intense interest, in an attempt to read the innermost secrets of a manhood that was capable and worthy of proving a magnet to the soul even of Christ.

Personal and Universal Love

Before leaving this phase of the subject, it should be observed that there is no conflict between this personal and preferential love of Christ for John and his universal love for every soul in the world, for the conscious experience of every earnest Christian shows that these personal affections may exist in entire harmony with a love which embraces all our fellow members of the human race.

Question of Authorship

Dr. Isbon T. Beckwith meets squarely all the arguments of those who claim that the Apostle John is not the author of the Fourth Gospel and of the Apocalypse.¹ His position respecting the Gospel of John also receives the support of men like Professor James Drummond, Dr. Theodor Zahn, and many others. It can therefore properly be accepted as the basis for this text-book, with its clearly practical purpose.

External and Internal Survey

It would seem to be most helpful, in the first place, to survey as rapidly and concisely as may be the material relating to the life and work of John as viewed from without, and then, in the second place, to follow this with a presentation of his nature and character as viewed from within. Of course it is not possible nor necessary to keep these lines of consideration strictly

¹Isbon T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John* (1919), 358, 393.

apart; but in general, that which follows in the present Chapter will traverse the data of his outward life and service to the opening kingdom, and Chapter II will present the analysis of his inner personality.

[2]

2. John in the Synoptic Gospels

By Blue Galilee The pear-shaped Sea of Galilee, about twelve miles long from north to south and one half as wide, is one of the charming smaller sheets of water of the world. Girt round by bold, even lofty hills with snow-capped Hermon in the background, at the time of Christ its shores were crowded with cities and villages. Chief among the cities, with perhaps 100,000 inhabitants, was Capernaum, on the northwestern shore of the lake, having the distinction of being the central location of our Lord's public ministry. Fishing was so prominent an occupation that it gave name to some of the villages or towns on its shores, especially Bethsaida, "Fishertown," north of the lake, and Tarichæa, "Curingtown," at the southern end.

John and Three Other Fishermen Called When John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, Jesus seemed to have been impelled to return to Galilee and to inaugurate a more aggressive ministry. He had previously met some of the men who were to be called leaders among the apostles, but they had continued their

work as fishermen. He now calls four of them to forsake their boats and nets and steadily accompany him. One of them was John. Passing along by the Sea of Galilee, our Lord "saw Simon and Andrew . . . casting a net into the sea ; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they left the nets, and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets, and straightway he called them ; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him" (Mark 1:16-20). The reference here to the "hired servants" has made it seem probable that John's family was one of considerable wealth, and even if they had a town house in Jerusalem it is not to be thought of as out of accord with the pursuit of fishing on the Sea of Galilee. There was needed only a word from Christ to cause these two brothers to leave all and follow him. They also were aware of the miraculous draft of fishes preceding the call of Peter, for Luke says, after stating how Peter was "amazed" at the draft of fishes, "and so were also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon" (Luke 5:10).

**Chosen an
Apostle**

A few months of apprenticeship pass and the time comes when Jesus chooses his twelve apostles. John with his brother James are among the first designated to this sacred office, and Mark tells us that at the same time

Christ named the two brothers "sons of thunder."¹ Other reference in the Synoptic Gospels contribute their light to reveal the activity of John as a member of the apostolic band. His name is in the list of the twelve when they are sent out as messengers to preach and work cures (Matt. 10:2).

Intolerant Zeal In the later period of Christ's ministry, when he was especially training his apostles, John at one time said to him, "Teacher, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followed not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me" (Mark 9:38, 39). Still later, when our Lord left Galilee for the last time, he approached northern Samaria with his apostles, but in accordance with their immemorial prejudice the people of a certain village would not receive him when he sent messengers ahead to make ready for his coming, "because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire come down from heaven, and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them. And they went to another village" (Luke 9:51-56).

Ambitious Request In the final journey to Jerusalem, James and John, probably incited to the step by their mother and assisted by her, make their ambitious request of Christ to sit on his

¹Mark 3:17. See page 28 of the text-book, concerning the idea that may be attached to this name.

right and left hand in his kingdom, which calls forth from him a gently reproving explanation as to why such a request cannot be granted.¹

Later Episodes On Tuesday of the Passion Week, as Christ with the Twelve are seated on the Mount of Olives, John together with Peter, James, and Andrew comes to the Master to inquire privately as to the fulfillment of his prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and end of the world (Mark 13:3). On Thursday of Passion Week it was John whom Christ directed to accompany Peter to Jerusalem from Bethany to arrange for the observance of the passover by Christ and his disciples (Luke 22:7-13).

Record Accords With His Nature The one fact to be emphasized is that the simple picture of John which one gathers from all these references in the Synoptics agrees with what is otherwise known of his personality and work. He is in the front rank of the disciples and apostles of Christ, but not conspicuous, and one feels that his nature is at the same time intense and retiring.

[3]

3. John in the Personal Allusions of the Fourth Gospel

Self-Effacement of Love To one who has not had the fact brought home to him it is surprising to find that the name of John

¹Mark 10:35-43. See also Matt. 20:20, and note that if Salome, the mother of James and John, was a sister of Mary, Jesus' mother, the request would not seem presumptuous, since those making it still viewed the kingdom as material.

the apostle is not mentioned in the Fourth Gospel. Neither is there found in this Gospel the name of James his brother, nor that of his mother, though it is supposed that she is the one mentioned by the name Salome in Mark 15:40.¹ His father's name, Zebedee, occurs only in John 21:2, and this chapter is thought to have been written to authenticate what went before, and reveals a situation in putting forth or guaranteeing the Gospel that seemed to require this phrase, "the sons of Zebedee." And in this list they come last among the apostles mentioned, after Thomas and Nathanael, instead of in their usual place after Peter (Andrew is not mentioned). But further than this John would not go, his attitude respecting the use of his name being like that of a lover who desires self-effacement to all but the one loved, and craves the exclusiveness of a name known only to the two whose souls are indissolubly knit together.

Two Win Two Of the two disciples of John the Baptist who heard his testimony to the Christ, when the Saviour was baptized, and then followed him to learn more concerning him, one was Andrew, and he found his own brother, Peter, and brought him to the Master. The other disciple, unnamed, is doubtless John, the apostle, author of this Gospel, and many suppose that at this time he also found his own brother James, and directed him to Christ. If this is so, it explains how the Master could come to these four, Peter and Andrew, James

¹Compare with this Matt. 27:56.

and John, fourteen months later, and call them from their fishing-boats, by the Sea of Galilee, as was seen in the Synoptic record. It also explains why their names stand first in all the lists of the twelve apostles. They were the very first souls that were attracted to their Lord out of the world of mankind.

John at the Paschal Meal

The whole period of Christ's ministry now passes, and the record is in the midst of the Passion Week before another personal allusion to John occurs in the Fourth Gospel, while frequently we seem to see him in the background during many incidents that he records. His intimate relation to his Lord is then revealed in his position at the table and what he says in the intercourse of the paschal meal which is being held in an upper room in Jerusalem. Christ and the twelve apostles are reclining, according to the Oriental usage then prevailing, around the three sides of the table, the fourth side being open so that they can be served. While the meal was in progress the Master uttered the startling words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. The disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake. There was at the table reclining on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, and saith unto him, Tell us who it is of whom he speaketh. He leaning back, as he was, on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? He it is, for whom I shall dip the sop, and give it to him. So when he had dipped the

sop, he taketh and giveth it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot" (John 13:21-26.) In this connection the point chiefly to be emphasized is the peculiar intimacy that has grown up between Jesus and John since the time, three years before, when they began the personal touch with each other at the Jordan.

[4]

John's Acquaintance with the High Priest

The Fourth Gospel shows that when Christ was about to be apprehended in Gethsemane, he secured, as far as was practicable, the exemption of the eleven apostles from arrest, saying to the officers, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way" (John 18:8). The apostolic band, on their part, took quick advantage of the opportunity, at least after the futile effort of Peter, who struck off with a sword the ear of the servant of the high priest, "and they all left him, and fled" (Mark 14:50; Matt. 26:56). The Synoptic Gospels, however, indicate that Peter soon turned and "followed him afar off" (Matt. 26:58; Mark 14:44), and was not long afterward seen in the court of the high priest whither Christ had been taken. But how Peter was able to gain admission into the court is told only in the Fourth Gospel. "And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing

at the door without. So the other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, went out and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter" (John 18:15, 16).

**John's Prompt
Return After
Christ's Arrest**

It thus becomes plain that even more promptly than Peter, John had ceased his flight, and sought to be near his Lord in his time of trial.

It is probable that the statement in the Fourth Gospel that John was known to the high priest is at the bottom of the tradition which later arose at Ephesus that John himself was a priest.

**John's Presence
at the Cross**

The Fourth Gospel omits many particulars of the crucifixion given by the Synoptics, and contains other features that belong to it alone. Toward the close it says: "There were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home" (John 19: 25-27). It is now thought by many writers that in this passage four women are designated, and that the words, "his mother's sister," designate Salome, the wife of Zebedee, John's mother. If this is so, it discloses a new ground for the affection and affinity of

Jesus and John, for they were cousins, and gives a deep propriety to the touching act of the Lord in committing his mother to the care of the disciple whom he loved.

John and Peter's Visit to the Tomb

Passing now to the period between the resurrection and the ascension, the Fourth Gospel contains a striking passage, the germ of which is found only in the Third Gospel.¹ "Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb. She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying; and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed" (John 20:1-8). In this account there is a beautiful con-

¹Luke 24:8-12. Note that Luke mentions Peter alone of the apostles as going to the tomb.

sistency in the action of John and Peter at the tomb with what is known of them in the Gospels. The peculiar arrangement of the linen cloths and the napkin, observed by the two apostles, lying in their appropriate places with the very folds which they had when about the body and head of Christ,¹ constitute one of the strongest proofs of the resurrection, and it is not strange that John says that the sight caused in him complete or unquestioning faith in that event.

[5]

4. John in the Book of Acts

**Change to
the New Age**

Only a little time has elapsed in the transition from the Gospel period to that of the Apostolic era, but one is at once conscious that a striking change has occurred and that one is in a new age. This is shown in the relative position of John in the list of the apostles. In the Gospels the list opens with Peter and Andrew, James and John (Matt. 10:2; Luke 6:14), but in the Book of Acts the first names are Peter and John, James and Andrew (Acts 1:13). John has passed from fourth to second place, and is now next to Peter as a leading apostle in establishing the Church.

**A Comrade in
Service and
Tribulation**

In the third and fourth chapters of Acts, Peter and John are seen going up together to the temple, together healing the lame man, though Peter is the spokesman, and afterward together speaking the

¹David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh*, 509.

word of life to the people. Together also they are apprehended by the high priestly, Sadducaic party, and make such a masterly defense before the Sanhedrin that even their enemies " marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. . . . And when they had called the apostles unto them, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. And every day in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (See Acts chs. 3 and 4).

Ministering Among the Samaritans

In the aggressive, growing Church, events now move with increasing swiftness. The seven deacons or helpers are appointed and from their number Stephen is soon giving his burning arguments for the new faith in the synagogues of Jerusalem, till the cyclone of opposition arises that makes him a martyr and scatters most of the disciples. As a result the city of Samaria was evangelized by Philip. "Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. . . . They therefore, when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans" (See Acts 6:1-8, 25).

[6]

5. John in the Light of the Pauline Epistles

A Pillar in the Early Church

A single gleam of light on the position of John in the early Church comes from Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians. He is showing that the message he preached came to him from God and was not learned at Jerusalem, yet that it was endorsed by the leaders there. So he says, in the second chapter of his letter: "After the space of fourteen years¹ I went up again to Jerusalem . . . and I laid before them the gospel which I preached among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run in vain. . . . and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do" (Gal. 2:1, 2, 9, 10). If Paul was converted about 32 A. D., and this visit occurred fourteen years after that event, it proves that John was among the leaders of the Jerusalem church about 46 A. D., being still mentioned just after Peter, while James, the Lord's brother, who was esteemed the head of the mother church, is named first among those having control at Jerusalem.

¹Probably reckoned from his conversion.

6. John Disclosed as Author of the Johannine Writings

The Gospel and the Epistles

The unity of authorship of John's writings can best be summed up in the verdict of great and widely known scholars. Take then, first, the conclusion of Professor Zahn as to the common authorship of the Fourth Gospel and 1 John. "The unanimous tradition which attributed this writing (1 John) to the author of the Fourth Gospel is corroborated by an affinity of thought, vocabulary, and style such as can hardly ever be proved between a historical and a didactic writing of the same author, to say nothing of different authors." Again, Professor Drummond says: "I see substantially the same vein of thought, and detect the same mental characteristics, with just those shades of variation which one may expect to meet in the same mind and especially in a mind of this particular order. I am therefore obliged to adhere to the ancient view that the Gospel and the Epistle are works of the same author." The foregoing conclusion will so generally carry with it the acknowledgment of one authorship for 2 John and 3 John along with 1 John and the Gospel that proof is unnecessary.

The Gospel and the Apocalypse

In general it may be said that recent study of the Johannine writings tends more and more to remove the sense of contrast that was formerly felt between the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse.

Reynolds makes this statement: "Gebhardt and others have given all the evidence needed to prove that no two books of Holy Scripture are so coincident in teaching, even to special peculiarities, as the Gospel and the Apocalypse. . . . The same writer was able to see more deeply than any other into the heart of Jesus, and was also permitted to see more accurately than other apocalyptic writers into the ferments wrought in humanity by the leaven of the kingdom."

[7]

Light from the Apocalypse

How shall one prove from the Johannine writings that John labored as an apostle at Ephesus, and had an oversight of all the Christian development throughout the province of Asia?¹ As the first step one will turn to the Book of Revelation and note that John states that he is the only one who saw the things revealed in the book (Rev. 1:1, 7). It is found that he needs only to use the name John and all recognize him as the veteran leader and apostle (Rev. 1:1, 4, 9). Next one notes that John is told to write what he sees in a book and send it to the seven churches. It will be shown later that these seven churches or the cities in which they are located are gateways to the whole province, and their mention reveals the apostle's intimate acquaintance with the whole territory,² while

¹The province of Asia embraced the western part of Asia Minor. See Map, page 132 of this text-book.

²Rev. chs. 2 and 3; W. M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 74, 210-430. See also page 133, and Map, page 132.

his allusions in the letters show that he is familiar with the circumstances of each church.¹ From 53 to 63 A. D., under the labors of Paul, Ephesus had already become a strong Christian station in the westward growth of the Church. If St. John arrived there about 67 A. D., it was perhaps not more than four years after Paul had made his last visit to the Ephesian church, and not more than three years after his second letter reached Timothy in Ephesus asking him to come to Paul at Rome just before the martyrdom of the apostle.

Veneration and Influence The impression which one gains from the Johannine writings concerning the one who has produced them is that he is a person who calls forth great veneration from the Church of his time. In the Fourth Gospel, composed long after the others were written, there breathes the noble calm of one who has arrived at the profound assurance and depth of experience that often characterize the closing years of life. Scholars very generally agree that verses 18 to 23 of the twenty-first chapter strongly imply that Peter had already witnessed to his Lord by martyrdom, and that John alone is living of the original apostles. When one turns to the Johannine Epistles, he is still more keenly aware of the writer's venerated age and influence. In two of the letters he calls himself the "elder" (2 John verse 1; 3 John verse 1), and in the First Epistle he

¹Hast. Bib. Dict., IV, 555.

repeatedly addresses the members of the Church as "little children" or "my little children" (1 John 2: 1, 12, 13, 18; 3:18; 4:4; 5:21).

Authority Finally in the letters to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation he assumes that the whole Christian body throughout the Asiatic province accepts without question his full authority as their leader and the apostle of Christ.³ This Chapter may then close with his sublime salutation: "John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is, and who was and who is to come and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead. . . . To him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:4-6).

Suggestive Questions

The questions at the close of each of the chapters are, in many cases not related closely to the subject which precedes them, though they aim to follow the general order of thought as it has been presented. They are meant to be suggestive, and to awaken the mind of the student to consider the leading ideas in their broader relations. The question marked with an asterisk (*) may call for some discussion or yield a topic for debate.

1. How do you explain the love of one man for another, as in the case of David and Jonathan, or Tennyson and Henry Hallam (supposed to underlie the poem "In Memoriam")?

³Rev. chs. 2, 3.

2.* Is the special love of Jesus and John to be explained in a similar way?

3. What is the difference between this love and the general love of a Christian for all mankind?

4. How, in the main, do you characterize the Synoptic Gospels, as distinct from the Fourth Gospel?

5. What favorable aspects of John are found in the references to him in the Synoptics? What unfavorable aspects?

6. What do you suppose is the motive of John in omitting his name and the names of members of his family from the Fourth Gospel?

7.* What trait or action of John do you regard as the most impressive or noble among the personal allusions of the Fourth Gospel?

8. In what way does the incident of Peter and John's visit to the tomb illustrate the theme of Bushnell's famous sermon on Unconscious Influence?

9.* Does John appear to grow more prominent or less prominent when one passes from the Gospels to the Acts and Epistles? Illustrate your point.

10. What light can be found in the Johannine writings themselves indicating that the author resided at Ephesus?

JOHN IN HIS PERSONAL TRAITS

1. John a Man of the Common People
2. Connected with the Higher Circles
3. Uniting the Rural and the Urban
4. An Intense Nature
5. Showing a Marvelous Grasp on Reality
6. A Channel of Divine Truth
7. A Ministrant Nature for the Heart and Spirit

DAILY READINGS

- [1] Mark 1:14-20
- [2] John 3:31-36
- [3] John 4:27-42
- [4] John 11:5-16
- [5] 1 John 2:20-27
- [6] 1 John 4:1-8
- [7] John 15:9-16

CHAPTER II

JOHN IN HIS PERSONAL TRAITS

[1]

1. John a Man of the Common People

Not a Commonplace Man

When it is stated that John was a man of the common people, it must not be inferred that he was merely a practical nature of the ordinary type. His was the superior, the rare personality, that puts him in the class of the greatest of his fellows, the select circle out of all the ages that are dowered with genius. But some in that circle belong peculiarly to the common people. Such a man was Abraham Lincoln, in whom one feels almost the same mystical idealism which is so characteristic an element in John. Not in spite of this side of their nature, but rather because of it, both John and Lincoln were men of the common people, loving them and taking a profound interest in the problem of their well-being.

2. Connected with the Higher Circles

Probably a Man of Some Wealth

When Christ on the cross committed his mother to John, the record says: "and from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home" (John

19:27). Most writers think that this house of John's was at Jerusalem, and that the apostle at once went with Mary and his mother, Salome, from the place of crucifixion to his home, and that some of the events at the cross occurred while he was engaged in this errand of love. Therefore these incidents of the closing scene are absent from his narrative, but later he returned to the cross.

Inheritance from His Father The material resources of John have an explanation which lies rather plainly upon the surface of the Synoptic Gospels. He was probably too young when he entered upon his apostleship to have accumulated any considerable property by his own efforts. But, fishing on the Sea of Galilee was a lucrative business, and Zebedee, John's father, pursued it so extensively that there were "hired servants" in addition to himself and his two sons (Mark 1:20). The death of Zebedee soon after the beginning of Christ's public work appears to explain why Salome, John's mother, could be among the women who attended Christ and ministered unto him out of her substance.¹ Thus it is likely that the house in Jerusalem came to John by inheritance.

3. Uniting the Rural and the Urban

Colloquial New Testament Greek Professor Adolf Deissmann and several other investigators have made astonishing revelations as to

¹William Benham, *St. John and His Work*, 12. Compare Mark 15: 40, 41; Matt. 27:55, 56; Luke 8:2, 3.

the colloquial Greek of the period represented by the New Testament. Inscriptions of Asia Minor and great stores of Egyptian papyri and potsherds show that the Greek of nearly all the New Testament is the non-literary language of the people, not a distinct and peculiar form of Greek as was supposed.

Language of the Fourth Gospel "The rural element is counterbalanced by other characteristics of the great cities of the world when we come to the Gospel of St. John, the great book which combines the qualities of the Synoptic with the Pauline style. It is neither decidedly rural nor decidedly urban, but is decidedly popular. Its background, in spite of the Logos in the opening line, is not the colorless literary culture of the period, but the bright world of early non-literary piety. It is no mere accident that so many scenes and sayings recorded by St. John have found their way to the heart of the people in later Christian generations."¹

[2]

4. An Intense Nature

A Synoptic Saying There is a quality in John which corresponds to a saying Christ recorded in the Synoptics: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Matt. 11:12). It is clear that what Christ is emphasizing in this passage is not a burst of physical energy which shall seem to storm the gates of the

¹Adolf Deissmann, *Primitive Christianity and the Lower Classes*, Expositor, March, 1909.

kingdom, but a spiritual violence of desire and purpose, brooking no denial till it has obtained its object.

A Distinctive Name In the midst of Mark's account of the appointment of the twelve apostles, he says that Jesus surnamed James and John "Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). This name is another evidence of the intensity of John's nature. In addition to the occasions mentioned in the Synoptics when this quality was displayed,¹ there is a tradition that, when John entered a public bath-house at Ephesus and saw the heretic Cerinthus inside, he quickly withdrew without having bathed, saying: "Let us go out, lest the house fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is here." Unquestionably John was not merely characterized by sympathy and tenderness, as has sometimes been represented, but like his Master could on occasion blaze with indignation against falsehood and wrong, showing splendid virile strength.

Intense Convictions There are passages in the Fourth Gospel and in the Johannine Epistles which reveal the explosive energy of his convictions, as if a cloud silently becomes charged with electric force till the point of overtension is reached, when suddenly the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls. Such a point is reached at the close of the third chapter of the Gospel, where he says: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life: but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath

¹See page 7 of this text-book.

of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Again, in the second chapter of his first Epistle he says as he stands in Ephesus face to face with error that would undermine and overthrow the true doctrine of Christ's person: "Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, even he that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). Or take these words from the next chapter respecting those who deny in practice what they profess in words: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1 John 3:10). Finally in the second Epistle he counsels those under his care to withhold fellowship from those who are recreant to the true teaching: "Look to yourselves," he says, "that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward. Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John verses 8-11).

[3]

5. Showing a Marvelous Grasp on Reality

Stands on the Solid Earth

Dr. Alexander McKenzie of Cambridge, Massachusetts, has given a striking statement of this aspect of

John's Gospel. "While we speak of this Gospel as the Gospel of the heart, it is also the Gospel of the head and hand; it stands on the ground, while at the same time it ascends into heaven. St. John is commonly spoken of as an eagle which is able to soar to the greatest heights. But he had his nest in a tree that was very firmly rooted in this world. Then, too, he had special advantages in being very near to our Lord. . . . Again, one thing that bears witness that John wrote the Gospel is that it was written by an old man. A peculiarity of the old man is that he notices small things. In this Gospel you will find more of what we are in the habit of calling the trivial things of life. I suppose if he was writing the account of the feast at Cana, a young man would have said, 'And there were set some water jars there which were large.' John says there were six water pots of stone, and that they held two or three firkins apiece. In the same way a young man would have treated the last miracle of our Lord at the Sea of Galilee; he would have said that they (the fishermen) were quite a little distance off the land; an old man would say 'they were about two hundred furlongs, I noticed.' 'There were a multitude of fish'; 'there were a hundred and fifty-three fishes, and they were big ones,' the old man would say."¹

Minute Details

In the Gospel of John one can find sixteen very exact statements relating to times and seasons; thirteen references to

¹Addresses on the Gospel of St. John, 107, 108.

specific places; and seven examples where he gives numbers with remarkable exactness. Even more impressive, as showing the tremendous basis of reality that underlies the Johannine writing are the clusters of concrete and circumstantial details scattered through John's pages, only a few examples of which can be given. "And upon this came his disciples; and they marveled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, what seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her? So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city" (John 4: 27, 28); "She . . . called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The teacher is here, and calleth thee. And, she when she heard it, arose quickly, and went unto him" 11:28, 29); "Jesus . . . riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments: and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (12:3-5); "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1); "Having many things to write unto you, I will not write them with paper and ink" (2 John verse 12); "I had many things to write unto thee, but I am unwilling to write them to thee with ink and pen" (3 John verse 13); "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is"¹ (Rev. 2:13); "Thou sayest, I am rich . . .

¹Doubtless referring to emperor-worship, of which, for the province of Asia, Pergamum was then the official center.

and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself . . .; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see" (2:17, 18). Each of these minute references to matters at Laodicea affords an added proof of John's realism.¹

[4]

Names Among the Apostles

An examination of the names of places as used in John's writings would show that he had a very realistic sense of the setting of each. Only John's remarkable use of personal names will here be surveyed. Naturally his most distinctive use of personal names is seen in special terms for several members of the Apostolic circle, as if he would revive the associations of the early years when they accompanied the Master and knew each other by warm, kindly names, almost like the nicknames of a group of brothers. Thus he reproduces the Aramaic "Cephas," "The Rock," as the name with which Christ first welcomed Peter into his service (John 1:42). So it is now generally understood that "Nathanael" (John 1:46-50; 21:2), "Gift of God," is the name by which his fellow apostles knew the one who is called Bartholomew in the Synoptic lists.² Again, there is a peculiar affec-

¹See page 133 of this text-book.

²Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14.

tionateness marking John's repeated use of the Greek name, "Didymus," "The Twin," after its Hebrew form, Thomas.¹

Deeply Rooted in Fact and History

It is impossible in the space that should be given to this division of the subject to trace out or even begin to exhaust all the ramifications of facts by which John links his writings to the real world of his time. It is as if he was aware of the way in which, like a giant redwood tree, the divine and spiritual truth which he presented was to rear itself toward heaven, to be tested through centuries by the fiercest winds of criticism. Therefore the more majestically it lifted itself, the more deeply it struck its roots down into reality and took hold on the very granite of life and fact from which it cannot be torn away. It would be interesting to trace out the larger historical, literary, and New Testament relations, especially of the Fourth Gospel, as these have been unfolded by several profound students, but it is not necessary, and with the simple detailed display of the evidence as given the case can rest.

6. A Channel of Divine Truth

Condition of Understanding Jesus

The one all-embracing condition for the man who should best understand Jesus is character. It has been made clear that in John the apostle all the more external conditions for understanding Jesus were fully met. He was probably a native of

¹John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2.

the very province—Galilee—where Jesus grew up and where his main public ministry was wrought out. At the same time John had unusual acquaintance for a Galilean with Judea and Jerusalem, the field where the deep, decisive attitude of the body of the Jewish people toward Jesus as the Messiah was to be manifested. By some peculiar providence he was in close touch with the high-priestly leaders, whose hands finally cast the die that doomed Jesus to death. To go to the other extreme, John seems to have close bonds of blood-relationship with Jesus. He appears to have been just enough younger than our Lord to have been at the keenest receptive stage of youth and opening manhood during the years of Christ's public ministry. It is evident that his nature was one that recorded with the utmost definiteness and accuracy and retained indelibly the part of the panorama of life in which he was interested, as it unfolded around him.

[5]

Peter the Pioneer

It seems to have been Peter's mission to be first to act after Christ's ascension, as he had so often acted during Christ's ministry, to blaze the way for the infant Church as it reached out and forward in its soul-saving work among Jews, Samaritans, and along the boundary of the Gentile world.

**Paul the Thinker,
Preacher, Organizer**

Possessing a profoundly logical mind, Paul after his conversion thought the Christian system

through, in his three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:17, 18) and during several preliminary years in Tarsus or Cilicia, then mightily preached the truth in Christ as he conceived it well over the Roman world, and organized the Gentile Church in accordance with the far-seeing principles of Rome and the Occident.

John the Conserver and Seer

John's mission is the more quiet and unobserved work of conserving what has been gained; of standing in the middle place between extremes; of making love victorious as the inmost heart of Christianity; and of seeing and setting before the world the new city of God. He conserved the truth concerning the Person of Christ, as will be shown in later chapters. He conserved the life and hope of the Church when its spirit was about to be crushed by imperial power. If Peter, on the whole, represented western Asia, and Paul Europe, John lived and worked through his serene age at Ephesus, where the two spheres of influence met and blended, to merge the two factors together.

John's Intuitive Insight

"John does not discuss," says de Presensé, "he affirms." Likewise Godet says of him: "He does not, like St. Paul, analyze faith and its object. It is enough for him to state the truth, in order that whoever loves it may receive it, as he himself received it, by way of immediate intuition, rather than of reasoning."

**Taught of
the Spirit**

There is given in later chapters¹ the more complete unfolding of the work of the Holy Spirit, as a part of the teachings of our Lord and of John. But surely he who was able immeasurably to enrich the Church by what he recorded and bore witness to respecting the Divine Illuminator and Guide, would not himself be left without the special inspiration and help of the Spirit. Therefore one may feel confident that John is writing out of his own experience, when he says, in his First Epistle: "The anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him" (1 John 2:27).

**Concrete Expression of the
Deepest Truth**

The absolutely priceless service of John as an interpreter of Christ is due in large measure to his gift of concrete expression. This it is that forms the central element in what can properly be called the Johannine style, so that wherever one opens his pages it is felt at once that John is speaking. The thought may be profound, but it is put in words so full of familiar figures of speech that the humblest reader can receive it as food for the soul. This feature makes the Fourth Gospel a message for the masses rather than for the few.

¹See pages 91-94, 155-157 of this text-book.

Professor Davison's Testimony Concerning this point Professor Davison says: "Its influence upon the thought and life of the Christian Church has been proportionately deep and far-reaching. It is no disparagement of other inspired Scriptures to say that no other book of the Bible has left such a mark at the same time upon the profoundest Christian thinkers, and upon the simple-minded believers at large."¹

[6]

7. A Ministrant Nature for the Heart and Spirit

His Devotion to Christ One needs not to look through John's writings for individual expressions of his devotion to his Lord. It breathes from every page and fills the whole like an atmosphere. It is the more profound and absolute in that John never, like Peter or Paul, even speaks of it.

His Exalted Mystic Fervor In the superscription to the Book of Revelation in the authorized version, one finds the words "the divine" attached to the name of John. It probably originated about the fourth century of our era, and among the schoolmen, who therefore thought of John peculiarly as a theologian, a man who had an exceptional grasp of divine truth. In its simplest and most noble meaning this was an eminently fitting title for the apostle, for with wonderful effectiveness he develops his whole range of Christian teaching from his

¹Hast. Bib. Dict., Extra Volume, 477.

idea of God as source of salvation, the one whose nature is perfect goodness and love.¹ When therefore as in the heading of this section, the term "mystic" or "mystical" is used concerning John, it does not mean that he is mysterious or vague, for he is always explicit; but it means simply that he considers all things from the exalted divine point of view, and with a certain warmth or fervor, so that his conceptions do not spring from the cold intellect, but from an intensely sympathetic and spiritual heart.

Symbol of the Eagle

In the fourth chapter of Revelation four seraphic living creatures are described, having faces which Christian thought and art have associated with the four evangelists, so that Matthew is the man, Mark the lion, Luke the ox, and John the eagle (Rev. 4:6, 7). The lofty, seraphic spirit of John, rising into the very heavens, finds in this symbol its true expression.

His Love and Sympathy

John is not only the beloved disciple; he is also the Apostle of Love. It needs no further proof to show that he is the man who best understood Jesus, when it is seen that he alone has fully caught the note that reveals Christ's inmost heart. And in vibrating, as John's whole personality does, to this deep, everlasting chord, John proves that he is in tune with the infinite Father, for in words which his own soul first fluted forth, "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

¹See pages 150-155 of this text-book, where the teachings of John respecting God are more fully unfolded.

[7]

**Pictures God
Yearning Over
the Whole World**

As in a true sense man ever sees only what he brings, it reveals the spirit of John when one finds in his Gospel the most remarkable verse of the whole Bible, known everywhere as "John three sixteen": "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). What a change has come since the olden days, perhaps forty years earlier,¹ when Paul was battling for the privilege of preaching the Gospel freely to the Gentiles! Now John does not need even to mention the question of Jew and Gentile. It is gone forever, and he himself who was then in the midst of the Palestinian Jewish Christian field has been for years a leader in the Gentile Christian Church in a great city and province half way on the road to Rome. Meyer gives this summary view of the apostle: "Love was the most potent element of his nature. . . . From the starting-point of an apostle of the Jews . . . he rose to the purest universalism,² such as we meet with only in Paul, but with a clear, calm elevation above strife and conflict, . . . going beyond not only Judaism, but even Paul himself, and interpreting most completely out of his own lengthened, pure, and rich experience, the life and the light, made manifest in Christ."³

¹Galatians was written about 53 A.D., Romans 57 A.D., while John wrote the Fourth Gospel perhaps about 97 A. D.

²This word here means that all people, especially Gentiles as well as Jews, have equal privileges in receiving directly from God the blessings of the Gospel.

³Meyer, Commentary on the Gospel of John, 3.

Essential and Priceless Service

John's work in portraying the Saviour, especially in the Fourth Gospel, is essential and priceless for the life and completeness of Christianity. When it is considered that Christ wrote not a word respecting either himself or his teachings, and that the other reporters of his deeds and words are at best largely external and elementary in what they tell, it seems clear that if the world was to know Christ adequately there must be at least one large-visioned, sensitive soul capable of communing with the inner life and thought of his Lord, and transmitting it to mankind.¹ Such a personality, in the inner circle of the apostles, so pure in his ideals, so unquestioned in his devotion, revealing the capacities of genius, and yet so practical and sound in nature as fairly to dovetail his testimony concerning Christ into the structure of the real world of his time, may have imparted a certain subjective quality to the language in which Christ's utterances are given, but this is more or less involved in all transmission and extension of divine truth through human agents. This unavoidable personal element is vastly counterbalanced by the fact that John, the man who best understood Jesus, is able to give as Godet has indicated this threefold interpretation of our Lord and his kingdom: chiefly *the person of Christ in the Fourth Gospel; the character of Christ's true disciple, in the Johannine Epistles; and the warfare and tri-*

¹Luther is credited with saying that if a tyrant should destroy the Holy Scriptures, and only a single copy of the Epistle to the Romans and of the Gospel of John should escape him, Christianity would be saved.

umph of Christ's Church in the Apocalypse. Chapters III-VII will now pass these several writings in review in their order.

Suggestive Questions

1. What other character seems to you of the type of St. John, not naming Lincoln, mentioned in the text-book?
2. What facts may be explained if we suppose Zebedee, John's father, died early in the period of Christ's ministry?
3. What qualities has the "Boanerges" element in John put into his writings?
4. What feature of the Fourth Gospel indicates that the author was advanced in years?
5. Illustrate the point that St. John was a conserver of Christianity.
6. What are some of the requisites fitting a person to be a channel of divine truth?
7. Give illustrations of John's power of concrete expression.
8. Why do you think the term "the divine" came to be attached to St. John?
- 9.* Does St. John tend to infuse into his Gospel a subjective element unduly?
10. How would you characterize concisely the three parts of the Johannine writings?

**SUPREME INTERPRETATION OF
CHRIST'S MISSION**

1. The Latest Gospel
2. The Universal Gospel
3. The Mature Gospel
4. The Systematic Gospel
5. The Gospel with a Purpose
6. The Personal Gospel
7. The Spiritual Gospel
8. The Divine Side
9. The Human Side

DAILY READINGS

- [1] John 3:12-21
- [2] John 2:11; 12:44-50
- [3] John 6:37-51
- [4] John 4:19-26
- [5] John 10:22-38
- [6] John 3:1-8; 8:12-16
- [7] John 8:31-36; 10:11-18

CHAPTER III

SUPREME INTERPRETATION OF CHRIST'S MISSION

[1]

1. The Latest Gospel

Influence of Paul's Writings Saul of Tarsus, or Paul, had come forward as the great apostle to the Gentile world, and after laying the foundation of the Church largely through Asia Minor and in cities around the Ægean Sea, had occasion to instruct or guide these growing Christian bodies through his Epistles. It is thought that they awakened a desire on the part of the Church to have accounts of Christ written by other apostles, or those closely associated with them.

Transition from Oral to Written Gospels It must not be supposed that there was nothing corresponding to the written Gospels during these thirty-five years from 30 A. D. to 60 or 65 A. D. This was the period of oral Gospels,¹ imparted from one to another among Christians, forming the basis of much of the preaching, and doubtless used in catechetical classes. But when it

¹Hast. Bib. Dict., II, 238-240.

was seen that the "eye-witnesses" would soon pass away, and that their accounts of Christ would be lost or distorted, they were reduced to writing.

Appearance of the Synoptic Gospels The general period in which the Synoptic Gospels are now thought to have been produced is from 58 to 65 A. D., the Gospel of Mark coming at the beginning of the period, the Gospel of Matthew from 60 to 63 A. D., and the Gospel of Luke at the close.

Period of the Fourth Gospel The period of the Fourth Gospel, in contrast with that which has just been given, would extend from about 80 A. D. to 97 A. D. Even if John sent forth his Gospel toward the close of this period, he would be brooding over it, and perhaps slowly writing it during all the earlier part of the period.

2. The Universal Gospel

Outlook of John It is not to be understood that, if in their origin the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke had a special reference to Jews, Romans, and those touched by Greek culture and influences, there is not a place for their immensely wide use in the world when it comes to the question of their final, God-intended purpose. John's contrasted outlook comes from the fact that his Gospel, even at the time of its production, had a truly universal character. Some have sought to show that the Fourth Gospel was in part directed toward errors

of the time; but the only error clearly involved is the universal error and sin of unbelief. While, as was seen in the preceding chapter, John's Gospel was firmly anchored in reality, its great outlines of truth lifted it above all limitations of time.

Views of Writers McClymont, one of the clearest of writers, says: "If the first Gospel represents Jesus in relation to the Jewish past, the second to the Roman present, the third to the Greek future, the fourth may be said to depict him in his relations to the universe, in that eternity in which past, present, and future are alike included. In keeping with this is its frequent use of the word *kosmos* (universe, world), which occurs seventy-eight times, as compared with fifteen times in the Synoptics." It is not strange, therefore, that Stevens notes that "the apostle blends the religious life in this world with the eternal spiritual order. . . . Nothing is said of institutions, not even of the Church. No emphasis is laid upon sacraments. . . . His teaching summons men, first of all to live the sort of life which Jesus Christ has revealed and illustrated. . . . He thus places at the center what is by its very nature central."

[2]

3. The Mature Gospel

**Church had Reached
a More Mature Stage**

The church life of southern and western Asia Minor, with which John's ministry

was associated, had probably reached a greater maturity than that of any other one section. It had received both early and late an unusual share of Paul's most effective labors, and early and late some of his greatest and richest Epistles. The seven churches mentioned in the Apocalypse simply as distributing-points to others, throughout their districts, show how churches abounded throughout this territory. Then under John the churches of the western section had made such progress that most of the problems that Paul had to face were in John's day entirely outgrown.

**Synoptic Gospels
Largely Represent
Missionary and Cate-
chetical Matter**

The Synoptics contain or reflect matter composed with a missionary aim—to win those from without—or catechetical material—to instruct those recently brought within the fold. It is interesting in this connection to remember that Mark's Gospel is the one most widely used among new converts in the mission fields to-day.

**The Fourth Gospel
is Intended Primarily
for Christians**

In summing up now the conditions which shaped the Fourth Gospel, one should note that John is writing in the midst of what was probably the most highly developed Christian community of his time, in a new era that seems to have left the times of the Synoptics and of the Pauline and Petrine Epistles utterly in the rear. Moreover, the temper of John is not that of

an evangelist or a missionary to new regions, but of the type that in all periods has ministered to the deeper life of those who are already disciples of Christ. So when he says: "These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, . . . and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31), it is not the initial belief that is meant, but it is the deeper belief of an enlightened and fully devoted Christian soul, and it is not that the recipient may have the opening life, but rather the abundant life in Christ. Thus the way is open to make this the most mature and transforming Gospel which should be produced. And such the unerring instincts of Christians have recognized it to be, so that John's Gospel is the one that is most abundantly called for among those who have been profoundly taught of God.

4. The Systematic Gospel

Built Around a Central Idea

The Fourth Gospel has a central idea running through it which imparts to it a wonderful degree of system and symmetry.

Says Dr. Marcus Dods: "In the whole range of literature there is no composition which is a more perfect work of art, or which more rigidly excludes whatever does not subserve its main end. From the first word to the last there is no paragraph, sentence, or expression which is out of its place, or with which we could dispense. Part hangs together with part in perfect balance."¹

¹Expositor's Bible (John), I, Introductory Note.

Main Divisions

The main divisions of the Fourth Gospel may be indicated as follows: Prologue, 1:1-18; Manifestation of Christ's Glory in His Public Work, 1:19-12:36; Pause or Interlogue for Reflection and Review, 12:37-50; Manifestation of Christ's Glory in Communion with His Apostles, Chapters 13-17; Manifestation of Christ's Glory in Suffering, Death, and Resurrection, Chapters 18-20; Epilogue, Chapter 21. It should be understood that while the manifestation of the divine glory of Christ is going forward, the various stages of the growth of faith on the part of his friends and of unbelief by his enemies are being shown, and they constitute the tragic movement of the Gospel.

[3]**5. The Gospel with a Purpose****Its Historical
Soundness
Unaffected**

That John should have a definite purpose in writing his Gospel, and that he should declare that purpose, as is seen in the words of 20:31, "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in his name," need not and does not in any way affect the historical fairness and soundness of his work. Out of the mass of his knowledge about Christ, the apostle simply selects and arranges the facts or material bearing upon his purpose, and this he had a perfect right to do, as long as he has clearly stated his purpose,

and shown that it was not his intention to write a complete biographical account of the Master.

6. The Personal Gospel

Emphasis on the Person of Christ

It may be best to summarize the statements of Drummond who has treated the contrast of John with the Synoptics at this point very suggestively. He notes that in the Synoptics Jesus deals mainly with great moral and spiritual principles, and touches only incidentally upon his own personal claims. In John, although there are other subjects, the prevailing topic is Jesus himself, and his relations to God, to his disciples, and to the unbelieving world. The repeated use of the word *ego* (Greek, meaning "I") is an indication of how prominent the personal claims of Christ are in John's Gospel. The word is always more or less emphatic in Greek. It is used by Christ in Matthew 15 times, in Mark 9 times, and in Luke 10 times; and in only a few of these cases would it carry with it the assertion of his authority or preëminence.

Focusing Faith on Himself

But in John Christ uses *ego* 117 times, and at least 35 of these are in distinct assertion of his own claims. Among these are the remarkable sayings peculiar to the Fourth Gospel, where Christ says: I am the bread of life; the light of the world; the door; the good shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the way, the truth, and the life; the true vine. He declares that he is from above, and that he has come

forth from God, that he and the Father are one; and, in accordance with this, that he has conquered the world, that he will send the Comforter, that he will raise up in the last day him that believes on him. This last expression directs thought to the Greek word for "believe," which is found 100 times in John's Gospel, and in 33 cases it refers expressly to believing on Christ, and 11 more occurrences of the word imply such belief by the context. In 20 of the instances the term is ascribed to Christ, who insists upon faith in himself as fundamental in securing deliverance from sin and attaining eternal life.¹ The truths involved will come up in later chapters, and it is only required here to fix the point of how personal is the Fourth Gospel as respects him who is its central figure.

**Prominence of
Personal Interviews**

Almost an equal contrast is seen in the place which is given to personal interviews, conversations, and discourses in John's Gospel as compared with the Synoptics. This feature of the Gospel begins with the interviews of Jesus with the first disciples that came to him, as recorded in the first chapter (John 1:35-51). It proceeds through the wonderful conversations with Nicodemus (John 3:1-15) and the woman at Jacob's well (John 4:6-26). It occurs again with the man at Jerusalem who was born blind (John 9: 35-38) and with Martha and Mary before Lazarus was raised from the dead (John

¹The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel, 13, 14.

11:20-32). It is even continued after his resurrection in the almost inexpressible personal revealings of care and sympathy toward Mary Magdalene (John 20:14-17), and of his gracious restoration of Peter to his apostolate (John 21:15-22).

[4]

7. The Spiritual Gospel

Meaning of the Word

Dr. Sanday says: "A 'spiritual Gospel' meant one that ought to bring out the divine side of its subject. . . . Spiritual means 'indwelt by the Spirit of God.' And it was that side of the life of Christ in which the Spirit of God was seen living and working in him that the Fourth Evangelist undertook specially to describe. . . . The phrase 'a spiritual Gospel' is a happy one; it just expresses, in the briefest compass, that which most differentiates the Fourth Gospel from the other three. . . . The Gospel does not in the least profess to do what the modern biographer does; but what the writer does profess to do, he was perfectly within his right in doing. He desired to set forth Christ as divine."

Larger Present Meaning

The Fourth Gospel can now be called the spiritual Gospel, because there is unfolded therein, besides the divine nature of Christ, the spiritual idea of God, the personality and action of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual character and power of the believer, and the spir-

itual nature of the kingdom. The remainder of this chapter may therefore be devoted to considering some of the phases of the spiritual element in the Fourth Gospel.

8. The Divine Side

Spirituality of God and Worship

In nothing does Jesus more fully show his divineness than in the prodigality with which he uses truth. His utterance of one of the profoundest ideas in the whole field of revelation—"God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24)—was made to an obscure, untrained, Samaritan woman of questionable moral character. But see how fully the result justified his confidence in the power of the truth when given in warm and living sympathy to the humblest soul! And this is only the superlative instance of what Jesus was doing constantly. Other great servants of God in the years that have elapsed since he sat by the well have caught the law of intensive influence from his example, and have learned that the more the soul of man universally is trusted the more it will respond to the highest truth. Especially have the missionary efforts of modern times shown that apparently the most debased of peoples, sunk in superstition and even cannibalism, have yet natures capable of responding to the most intimate spiritual messages of Christianity, so that equally among the sordid and stunted Hottentots, the wild 'Ngoni, the fierce Zulus of Africa, the

bloodthirsty head-hunters and cannibal warriors of Oceania, the cruel Mongols of Asia, or the savage natives of America the spiritual glories of the gospel have revealed their transforming power.

Christ the Son of God The relative strength with which John brings out the divine element in Christ is that which doubtless chiefly led the early elders and Clement to call the Fourth Gospel the spiritual Gospel. It can then be said that John gives Christ an exalted, divine place by the very prominence with which his Gospel uses the terms "the Son," "the Son of God," "the only-begotten Son."

[5]

Oneness with the Father Here may be placed two passages where Jesus asserted such a unique oneness with the Father as to stir his adversaries to violent action. The first of these comes at Jerusalem at the time of the second passover of his ministry, after he had healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda. "The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole. And for this cause the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work. For this cause, therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God (John 5:15-18). About twenty months later, Jesus is again in Jerusa-

lem at the feast of Dedication, and in the midst of another discussion with his Jewish opponents, he asserts: "I and the Father are one." The Jewish opponents clearly understand what is involved, for they "took up stones again to stone him," . . . "because" (to use their real words to him) "that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:30-33).

The Logos Teaching

Lastly in this succession of evidences of Christ's divineness, drawn from the Fourth Gospel, may be observed the Logos teaching, which, though standing at the beginning, may have been written last, as an idea inducting John's Greek-speaking readers into the wonderful riches of this Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Spiritual Power of Christ's Atoning Work

The general statement of the basis of Christ's atoning work is found in the words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This shows that the salvation of mankind has its infinite and inexhaustible source in the love of God.

Life for the World

The deep, broad and fundamental statement of Christ's atoning and saving work for the world is found in the great discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum (John 6:32-59), and the heart of it is in the words of the fifty-first verse: "I am the living bread which came

down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." Says Dr. David Brown: "Here for the first time in this high discourse, our Lord explicitly introduces his sacrificial *death*, not only as that which constitutes him the bread of life to men, but as that very element in him which possesses the life-giving virtue."

**Healing and
Attractive Power
of the Cross**

There are two passages of the Fourth Gospel which should at least be mentioned as pointing to the marvelous curative and attractive power of the cross of Christ. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (John 3:15). Again when the Master stands just within the shadows of the Passion Week, he cries: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32).

[6]

9. The Human Side

**Spiritual Birth
into the Kingdom**

One of the monumental generalizations of science is that which is crystallized in the word biogenesis, that life can only come from life. This law is no less binding in the spiritual than in the natural realm, yet how inclined are men to forget this fact, and to persuade themselves that the kingdom can be en-

tered through some process of self-originated development. Over against this tendency has ever stood the Fourth Gospel, and the declarations of Christ that stand out with the utmost clearness: "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), which seems to point to the God-given power of *seeing* or apprehending the kingdom; and "except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5), which appears to emphasize the essential conditions of *entering* or *experiencing* the kingdom.

Born from Above

That the expression "born anew," more closely rendered from the Greek, means "born from above," shows how spiritual is the conception. It is the birth or transformation which has its source in the heavenly world, and involves the contrast which Jesus makes elsewhere when he says to the Jews, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above" (John 8:23).

Born of God

In the first chapter, John the apostle says of Christ, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). This makes the idea or nature of the new birth still more definite and exalted. As the first birth is after a certain order of life, the natural

human life on earth, so the second or new birth is after a higher order of life, the life of God.

John's Key Idea for the New Nature The Apostle brings out the key idea or teaching of his Gospel as to the new nature which constitutes a person a Christian in the highest spiritual sense. He looks at it, not so much like Paul, as forgiveness from sin and deliverance from the law, even the law of inner depravity, but views it as "life," the incoming of a higher divine life. So he says of Christ, "In him was life" (John 1:4). Christ also declares concerning himself: "As the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself" (John 5:26). Again he says, as he looks at the great purpose of his advent: "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

Spiritual Illumination of the Believer One of John's great antitheses is that of darkness and light, the darkness standing for the whole realm of evil and sin, and the light for all that is divine and good. The contrasted terms appear at the very beginning of the Fourth Gospel in the expression "the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness apprehendeth it not" (John 1:5), and run through all of John's writings.

The Light of the World In a still more emphatic way Jesus makes the proclamation at the feast of Tabernacles: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in dark-

ness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). In what a marvelous manner this has had fulfillment. Says J. G. Butler: "Amid whatever changes of arts, letters, institutions, empires, one figure continues supreme in history. . . . This supreme man was born to no rank, and trained in no school, held himself aloof from none, and did not shrink from the touch of the sinful, sought no fame, and seemed content to strew his words on the vanishing winds. But he perfectly expressed in his crystalline character whatever all peoples concede most precious, and to-day governs governments; his words are the light, his temper the model, and his life the inspiration, of all that is noblest in the modern as in the ancient character and thought; and from his inconspicuous advent the new ages of liberty, of discovery, and of progress date their birth."

The Illumination of the Spirit

The place and work of the Holy Spirit as given in the Fourth Gospel are more fully presented in Chapters V and VIII¹, but it is not possible fully to unfold the superlative spiritual value of this Gospel and make no allusion to the constant development and illumination of the new life of the believer due to communion with the Spirit. The great principle is stated that "It is the Spirit that quickeneth" (John 6:63, A. V.).

[7]

Spiritual Freedom and Equipment

When Christ is engaged in the bitter controversy with the Jews during the feast of Tabernacles,

¹See pages 91-95, 155-157 of this text-book.

he announces the principle, to those Jews that had believed on him, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). As the apostle wrote these words, they were doubtless felt by him to be among the vivid words that had entered into his own experience. The truth as he had found it in the service of Christ, had for one thing set him free from legalism. Rightly understood, the principles of Christ's service always do this, though it is to be feared that many disciples of our Lord almost unconsciously create a new legalism of a Christian sort, and put themselves under its yoke—one of "duties" and "rules" and "ceremonies."

Freedom through the Son But shortly after the first statement about spiritual freedom, Christ gives one that goes far deeper, because it involves directly the problem of freedom from sin. So he says, "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house forever: the son abideth forever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:34-36). Here then, the inmost realm of real spiritual freedom is reached, and it was because John had dwelt during blissful years amid its golden vales and purple vistas, teeming with its twelve-fold fruits of paradise, that he remembered and wrote these words that had come like a spiritual emancipation proclamation from the Saviour's heart.

Spiritual Ward and Watchcare

A negative characteristic of the Fourth Gospel is that it contains no parables. The nearest approach to parables are impressive comparisons based upon some familiar natural object, office, or relationship, like the shepherd and sheep of the tenth chapter or the vine and branches of the fifteenth chapter. Writers practically agree in calling these allegories. Those in the tenth chapter of John's Gospel are of great beauty, and show the ward and watchcare of Christ.

Suggestive Questions

- 1.* What appears to have been the effect of Paul's Epistles in quickening the production of other New Testament writings?
2. Contrast the dates and aims of the Synoptic Gospels with those of the Fourth Gospel.
- 3.* What do you consider is the key-idea that determines the plan of John's Gospel?
- 4.* To what extent do you think that the purposes of the writers of the books of the Bible enter into their productions?
5. What are the proofs that the Fourth Gospel is more personal than the others?
- 6.* What do you think is meant when it is said that John's is a spiritual Gospel?
7. What are some of the things on the divine side that make up the spiritual riches of John's Gospel?
8. What is the bearing of the natural law that life can come alone from life?
9. What is St. John's favorite term for the new nature?
10. By what means is it shown in John's Gospel that the believer is delivered from legalism and made free and secure?

SEVEN SIGNS WITNESSING TO CHRIST

1. Changing of Water into Wine
2. Healing of the Nobleman's Son
3. Restoring of the Impotent Man at Bethesda
4. Feeding of the Five Thousand
5. Walking on the Water
6. Giving Sight to the Man Born Blind
7. Raising of Lazarus

DAILY READINGS

- [1] John 2:1-11
- [2] John 4:46-54
- [3] John 5:1-18
- [4] John 6:1-15
- [5] John 6:16-24
- [6] John 9:1-11
- [7] John 11:35-44

CHAPTER IV

SEVEN SIGNS WITNESSING TO CHRIST

[1]

1. Changing of Water into Wine

Miracles in the Fourth Gospel

There are seven fully described miracles given in the Gospel of John before the Passion Week, and while this may be a mere accidental circumstance, it is far more likely to have come from the purpose of the author to make use of the sacred number seven. Though the Johannine miracles are few, they are great, in the sense that they give the impression of being among the most difficult to be performed. As they will be treated one by one under the subheadings of this chapter, they need not here be presented by their titles.

John's Two Words for the Miracles

The author of the Fourth Gospel uses the term "work" or "works" as one of the words for a miracle or Christ's miracles. Thus he records Christ as saying: "I did one work (meaning his feeding of the five thousand) and ye all marvel because thereof" (John 7:21). Or again Christ says: "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both

seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24). Often, throughout the Gospel, John uses the word "works" in the broader meaning of Christ's doings as a whole. The other word which he employs far more exclusively for a miracle of Christ is "sign," and it will be found that while the Synoptics use it rarely or not at all for the miracles of the Saviour, it is quite a regular word for a miracle in the Book of Acts (Acts 4:16, margin, 30; etc.) and with Paul (Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12). And it is on the whole the most desirable word, for while a good word is sometimes used meaning an act of *power*, and other less valuable words are employed meaning a *prodigy* or a thing of *wonder*, the word *semeion* (say-mi'-on) meaning *mark* or *token* conveys the idea that a miracle is a *sign* of the supernatural, of the presence and working of God. This is the right view, that the miracles are a part of the very substance of the divine revelation.¹ John's use of the word is therefore very beautiful and impressive.

Marriage Customs

A marriage in the East has always been a time of great joy. It was generally the part of the bridegroom adorned and anointed and attended by his groomsmen to go first to the home of the bride. She awaited him veiled from head to foot, and wearing a peculiar girdle and a wreath of myrtle leaves, either real or gilt or gold, which corresponded to the orange blossoms in modern Western lands, and links us with the Orientals. The wedding feast took place in the house of the

¹A. B. Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, 285; *Hast. Bib. Dict.*, III, 387, 388.

bridegroom's father, which was for a time the home of the young couple. The period of rejoicing and feasting might continue for several days. Sometimes one of the company and at other times a hired official acted as "governor of the feast" (John 2:8). It was at some such scene of nuptial festivity that the mother of Jesus and Jesus and his disciples were present as invited guests.

**Significance of the
Occasion and Miracle**

The presence of Jesus at this wedding and the fact that he honored the occasion with the

performance of his first miracle, in such a way as to show that he entered into the joyous social side of the event, is a matter of the deepest significance. It was a revelation of the great principle that Christ and Christianity are not molded by the ascetic ideal of John the Baptist. Our Lord later marks the contrast when he says, "John came neither eating nor drinking," while of himself he says, "The Son of man came eating and drinking" (Matt. 11:18, 19). It simply means that he mingled freely with the people, lived according to their natural, every-day standard, and recognized by his presence at the wedding that marriage is as sacred a state of life as that which purposely foregoes marriage.

[2]

2. Healing of the Nobleman's Son

**Purpose of
Christ's Miracles**

The miracles of Christ doubtless bear witness to his divine nature and glory, but if that were the

only or chief purpose which they could serve it is quite certain that they would never have been wrought, for Christ did nothing for his own glory. His miraculous works do witness to and glorify him, but that is, as it were, a "by-product." Christ wrought his miracles, just as he preached and as he associated with the lowly and outcast, because he loved people and would help them, and because he would preserve his disciples, so that his kingdom might go onward to bless later ages. In other words, his miracles are a part of his revelation; they reveal his love, or the love of God for the world. Says Professor Rishell: "Jesus stands higher in the estimation of the world to-day because he did his works out of a spirit of love than he would had he mixed with it a desire to secure faith in him. And here is the evidential value of miracles in its highest form. They prove his power; but they also prove his love. The world will be won to Christ not because he had the omnipotent power of God in him, but because he had in him God's infinite love."

**Nobleman
of Capernaum**

The word translated "nobleman" is one which means an official of a king, so that it answers closely to the word courtier. It is thought that the man was a Jew and that he was attached to the court of Herod Antipas, who had a palace at Capernaum, and though only the "tetrarch of Galilee" (Luke 3:1) was in common parlance called king (Mark 6:14-23). Some have thought that the official was "Chuzas Herod's steward," whose wife Joanna was later one of the women that devotedly

accompanied Jesus in a part of his Galilean ministry and ministered to the Lord and his apostles of their substance (Luke 8:1-3; 24:10).

Christ's Call for Faith Jesus probably returned to Cana because it was there that the soil was

best prepared for him by the effect of his miracle of making the water wine about nine months before. Now the drama of the long conflict between unbelief and faith which filled the last two years of the Saviour's life was about to begin in real earnest; and as this courtier comes asking for Christ's presence and power at Capernaum for the healing of his son, it seems to bring to the Master a sense of the people's demand for outward wonder-miracles. So, having in mind less the man than the multitudes, Jesus says: "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe." But before him is a burdened father, and he cries out, "Sir, come down ere my child die." Then follows Christ's call for faith in himself and his word, apart from all outward wonders: "Go thy way, thy son liveth" (John 4:48-50).

The Nobleman's Response Can one say that to Jesus there came a happy surprise? At least

there came a deep joy, as he recognized that the nobleman "believed the word" which he had spoken, with no present visible evidence, other than the assertion of him who is the Life-giver. In perfect rest of soul in the asked-for result of the recovering of his boy, the father "went his way." If the "seventh hour" when the cure occurred was reck-

oned according to the Jewish mode, it would be one o'clock in the afternoon, and in that case some matter detained the courtier after he had started for Capernaum. If the Roman method was used, the hour when Jesus spoke the word would be seven in the evening, and while the man went from the home where Christ was staying it was only to an inn or the house of a friend till the dawn of the morrow, for it was not the custom of the Jews to travel at night. In either case he met his servants the next day bearing the precious tidings: "Yesterday, at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, thy son liveth: and himself believed [but now with even a higher soul-saving faith] and his whole house" (John 4:50-53).

[3]

3. Restoring of the Impotent Man at Bethesda

Jerusalem

Leaders Tested

Jesus had performed miracles in the capital city during the passover, probably more than enough to equal in number and importance the two wrought at Cana, and many apparently "believed on his name, beholding the signs which he did," but it was only a surface faith, and "Jesus did not trust himself unto them" (John 2:23, 24). Moreover, in all these forms of Christ's manifestation as Messiah at Jerusalem the real leaders of the nation had remained practically untouched. It is true that one member of the San-

hedrin, Nicodemus, had come as an inquirer, but he had done so timidly at night, and was not at this early stage won so fully to discipleship as to become a force on the side of Christ (John 3:1-10). So the Lord speaks a very pointed word to him when he says: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye (the Sanhedrin and leaders) receive not our witness" (John 3:11).

Why Jesus Baptized in Judea

John the Baptist had preached repentance and borne witness to the Messiah in Judea, and many of the common people had come sincerely, but "the Pharisees and Sadducees," that is, the national leaders, had not done so (Matt. 3:1-12). "And all the [common] people when they heard, and the publicans, justified God being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7: 29, 30). Therefore, when it became clear that the real national representatives would not come to his baptism, and that the numbers that did come might prove by invidious comparison a barrier to John his forerunner, Jesus closed his baptismal work and went into Galilee (John 4:1-3).

The Brave and Never-Despairing Worker

After the healing of the nobleman's son, there were a few months of varied labors in Galilee. Jesus visited Nazareth, preached in the synagogue, and was rejected. Caper-

naum now became the home city of Jesus, as far as any location could be called his home. Peter and Andrew, James and John, who are supposed for a time to have returned to their work of fishing, were summoned to follow him, and Matthew called, making the first five disciples or apostles. A wonderful day of healing and teaching in Capernaum, and a tour of eastern Galilee are recorded. Then, with a soul of high courage and a heart never despairing in its outreach, Jesus goes again to Jerusalem, probably to the second passover of his ministry (John 5:1).

**Points Relating
to the Third
Wonderful Sign**

The impotent man's case embodied features which perhaps made it the most chronic and hopeless of any of those gathered about the pool. For this reason he was selected from among the others as the subject of the miracle. This gracious work called for the exercise of the life-giving power of Christ in a remarkable measure. It was therefore adapted to form the basis or text for the discourse which followed.¹ This may explain why Christ does not seem to ask for faith on the man's part, though he may have secured the beginnings of it by his question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The false standards created by tradition, respecting God's moral law, and especially that which made the Sabbath a burden, must be overthrown in order to set free the religious life of mankind then and for the future. So Jesus says to the man: "Arise, take up thy bed and walk,"

¹See especially John 5:21, 26.

though "it was the Sabbath on that day" (John 5:9). This course called for sublime courage on Christ's part, for on their chosen ground of Jerusalem and Judea the Pharisees and other leaders might induce the people to regard Jesus' action as a capital offense, and cause him to be put to death. (John 5:16-18). But undeterred by any fear, he went forward in the path marked out for him by the Father.

[4]

4. Feeding of the Five Thousand

Great Intervening Year in Galilee

As far as is known Christ returned to Galilee at the close of the feast of the passover at which he restored the impotent man. The year which followed is usually the one counted from April, 28 A.D., to April, 29 A.D., and is known as the year of Christ's greatest popularity. Not a single event connected with it is noted by John, but in the Synoptics it is crowded with Jesus' most significant words and deeds. During this time, he chose his twelve apostles and preached the Sermon on the Mount. Toward the end of the year the death of John the Baptist occurs. The twelve return from their missionary tour, and Jesus goes with them across the sea, seeking a brief respite from labors, but the people follow him. This leads to the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the water, the only miracles aside from Christ's resurrection which are given both by John and the Synoptic writers.

Sweet is Rest

It was the time of the passover (John 6:4), but Jesus does not go up to Jerusalem. He has come to the great crisis of his work before the final experiences of the passion week. His forerunner, John, has just been put to death by the coarse, sensual Herod Antipas to satisfy the mad vengeance of a wicked woman. The soul of the Master is in no mood to mingle with the crowds at the capital. Both he and the Twelve need to be alone with God in the soothing silence of his works, and for a brief hour or two they obtain this as their boat moves across the lake before the gentle breeze, until the bow touches the sand of the northeastern shore. But here their rest ended. So eager were the people to receive the words of Christ and to have the benefits of his healing power that, as soon as it was perceived to what part of the lake the boat which bore Jesus and the apostles was going, they hastened around the shore, constantly swelling their number from every village and town through which they passed, until at the landing place the shore was thronged. Mark says: "They ran there together on foot from all the cities, and outwent them" (Mark 6:33).

**Still Sweeter
is Service**

What an appeal is in this hunger of humanity for help which those who have a higher truth or a richer life can supply! It is that which leads foreign missionaries on and on, and makes them long to be back on the field almost as soon as a furlough has brought

them to the home-land. McAll and his wife are in Paris for a fortnight's vacation from labors in England when the soul-cry of the French working men and women leads them to begin a simple form of tract distribution that led on to their great life-work. So it is nothing strange that Mark adds in the next verse, respecting Christ: "And he came forth [out of the boat] and saw a great multitude, and he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things" (Mark 6:34).

"Jesus . . . Saith unto Philip" How some of the less conspicuous among the apostles stand out on these pages of John! Andrew, and Philip, and Thomas, and Bartholomew, and Judas not Iscariot would have been but names except for this Gospel. To matter-of-fact Philip Jesus says: "Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? This he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do" (John 6:6). Thus our Lord is ever calling out the thought of his disciples in the presence of great world needs, and then lifting them to the height of his own solution of the problems.

"There is a Lad Here" It was left for John to remember the "lad" (John 6:9) who formed a living link among the correlated factors of this mighty miracle. Go where you will that boy or girl is the hope of the kingdom. A quick blaze was sweeping through an old rectory at Epworth. At

the last moment a little boy was taken out of an upper window. A lad was there, and through him the name Epworth is known around the world, while not less than ten million members of the kingdom are marching beneath banners whose ideals hark back to him. A girl romped and read and grew amid the wholesome scenes of a Wisconsin farm. Her statue stands in the rotunda at Washington and in the Hall of Fame at New York, and a host of womanly hearts welded by her influence are steadily throttling the liquor curse in many lands. Frances E. Willard was there. Your shortest path to meet the hunger of the multitude may be through what that boy or girl at your side possesses when put in the hands of the Christ.

**The Lord's Substitute
for the Passover Feast**

Our Lord might not go for this once to the national feast at Jerusalem, but he would have his own feast and invite as his guests all these trustful folk who had come out to meet him in the wilderness. "Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down, likewise also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces. . . . So they . . . filled twelve baskets with the broken pieces which remained over unto them that had eaten" (John 6:10-13).

[5]

5. Walking on the Water

**Occasion for
this Miracle**

The remarkable and exceptional miracle of Jesus' walking on the sea, followed almost immediately upon the feeding of the five thousand, and indirectly grew out of that event. Naturally the people were immensely stirred by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and perhaps the majority emphasized less its spiritual teachings than its material advantages. That was the danger in all use of the miraculous, and as Christ's popularity had been constantly growing among the susceptible Galileans and other peoples of the surrounding territory, because of his wonderful works, a crisis was now reached that must be met by prompt and wise action. The multitudes were losing sight of the spiritual character of his kingdom, and wild political hopes were being indulged that through this miracle-working Messiah the rule of Rome could be thrown off. At the close of this great meal by the mountain and the sea the enthusiasm threatened to break over all bounds. "Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).

"It Is I"

The apostles, following Christ's injunction, started to cross to Capernaum. But night settled down, "and the sea was rising by

reason of a great wind that blew. When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid." But at his assuring words, "It is I; be not afraid," they were ready to receive him into the boat, when Jesus completed the great miracle by causing that the boat, from "the midst of the sea," where the oarsmen were battling with the waves at three or four o'clock in the morning (Matt. 14:24, 25; Mark 6:47, 48), should be "straightway" or immediately "at the land whither they were going" (John 6:21).

Miracles Harmonious with God and Nature

As the chapter now closes its review of the three great nature miracles of the Fourth Gospel, a few points may be emphasized concerning the harmony of miracles with the fact of God and the laws of nature. If God pervades the world which he has made, it is reasonable to believe that he can still show his will in it, especially when moral and spiritual ends are to be served, as in answers to prayer, in special providence, and in the miracles connected with Christ's person and work, According to Rothe, miracles are acts of creation or acts of control upon already existing nature, using its laws by new combinations for the production of new effects. In either case there is no conflict with the laws or forces of nature.

[6]

6. Giving Sight to the Man Born Blind

**Eight Months
in the Synoptics**

The interval of eight months since the great double miracle of feeding the five thousand and walking on the water, has in the Synoptics, covered all the earlier part of the last year of Christ's ministry, or from about April to December, 29 A.D. It is the period when Jesus is in semi-retirement and largely training the twelve who would not "go away" when the mere carnal followers left him (John 6:66-69).

**At the Feast
of Dedication**

As Jesus approached Jerusalem to attend the feast of Dedication, the incident so full of charm occurs of his visit to Martha and Mary, when Martha is "anxious and troubled about many things," but Mary sits at his feet and listens to his word (Luke 10:38-42). But when Christ then goes on to Jerusalem, John describes him as engaging in one of the greatest of the healing miracles.

**Question of Sin
and Suffering**

The case of the man born blind awakened the thought of the disciples to the deep problem of the connection between sin and suffering. To their inquiry Jesus replied: "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3).

**Modern "Works
of God"**

Remarkable "works of God" have illumined the mission fields through the love, devotion, and skill of the

missionary physicians who have gone forth to serve the people in the name of their Master. Dr. Peter Parker was scarcely able to stand at the close of days of more than a hundred treatments and operations, many of which made the blind to see and the infirm and the helpless to walk, and which were counted miracles of healing by the Chinese. His pioneer medical and evangelistic labors marvelously opened province after province to the gospel, and the fame of the wondrous cures reached for hundreds of miles into the heart of the empire. Dr. John Kerr followed with seven hundred thousand patients and forty thousand operations to his credit. How incalculable is the influence of the medical and healing service joined with Christian character and teaching of Dr. J. C. Hepburn in Japan, Dr. G. L. Mackay in Formosa, Dr. O. R. Avison in Korea, Dr. John Scudder in India, Dr. W. S. Dodd in Asia Minor, Dr. George E. Post in Syria, Dr. Robert Laws in Africa, Dr. Wilfred Grenfell on the coast of Labrador, and an equal roll of women physicians and nurses like Florence Nightingale, Dr. Leonora Howard, Dr. Clara Swain, Clara Barton, and many Red Cross workers. These are only a few out of scores and hundreds who, walking in the path of the Great Physician, have brought relief and healing to almost countless numbers in lands of darkness and pain.

**First Brave
Confessor**

This graphic story of the healed man, with his unshakable testimony to the work which had been accomplished by

Christ, and his unanswerable logic proving that the one who had wrought such an unheard-of deed of beneficent power must be from God, always thrills the heart of the reader, like the words of other dauntless confessors of the ages. He was first in line with Stephen, and many a martyr-witness who later died in the arena among the lions. And it was like Jesus, as soon as he learned that the man had been cast out of the synagogue, to find him and bring him words of cheer.

[7]

7. Raising of Lazarus

Great Event in the Perean Period John's record shows that after Jesus visited Jerusalem, during the feast of Dedication, when he restored the man born blind, he retired into the province of Perea, which lies east of the Jordan (John 10:22, 40). His ministry there, covering events, discourses, parables, and miracles, extends from about November, 29 A.D., to the opening of the passion week at the beginning of April, 30 A.D. In the midst of these months, probably in February, of the year 30 A.D., there stands out this event of the raising of Lazarus like a lofty monument marking the divinity and glory of our Lord. Edersheim calls it "the miracle of miracles in the history of the Christ." Such statements, of course, belong to our human point of view; for, to the Omnipotent, one supernatural work is as easy as another. Yet, as bearing upon the culmination

of our Saviour's work and the determination of the Jewish authorities that he should die it holds a foremost place. It gave undeniable proof that Jesus was the Son of God and the promised Messiah, so that the leaders and rulers must accept him, or make definite plans to put him to death. The unfolding of the drama of the restoration of Lazarus to life draws forth declarations among the most wonderful that ever fell from Christ's lips: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Son of Man
No Less than
Son of God

From beginning to end, the unfolding of this remarkable episode brings to the forefront the tender human side of Christ's nature no less than the divine side. The strength of his love and friendship for the family at Bethany is seen when he takes his life in his hands and goes to act in so conspicuous a manner under the very walls of Jerusalem (John 11:14-16). The tears which he shed (John 11:35) and his whole bearing through all his ministration to this stricken household has caused the world to know that his is the sympathetic heart that can understand, feel, and assuage the griefs and sorrows of the whole human race, while holding out the only sound assurance of a happy immortality.

Suggestive Questions

1. Why is the word "sign" a good one for a miracle?
2. What are the chief proofs that Christ does not uphold an ascetic standard of life?
3. Why was the nobleman's faith of a kind to bring cheer to Christ?
4. In what way was the restoring of the impotent man and other miracles at Jerusalem a test of the national leaders?
5. What practical lessons in Christian work can be drawn from the miracle of feeding the five thousand?
6. In what respects was the whole episode of walking on the water a double miracle?
- 7.* Does the case of the man born blind and Jesus' words about him in John 9:3 raise the question whether sickness or disability can be God's purposed medium of good?
- 8.* Can medical missions and our institutions of mercy be properly compared to the healing ministry of Christ?
9. What problem did the miracle of the raising of Lazarus present to the Jewish rulers?
10. What are the best proofs of the completeness of Christ's human nature?

**CLOSING DISCOURSES AND INTER-
CESSORY PRAYER**

1. Jesus the Way to God
2. The Holy Spirit the Revealer and Comforter
3. Interrelations of Divine and Human Life
4. Love, the Unifier
5. The Power-house of Victorious Faith
6. Intercession in Christ and in His Disciples

DAILY READINGS

- [1] John 14:5-14
- [2] John 14:15-31
- [3] John 15:1-11
- [4] John 15:12-21
- [5] John 16:1-11
- [6] John 17:1-12
- [7] John 17:13-26

CHAPTER V

CLOSING DISCOURSES AND INTER- CESSORY PRAYER

[1]

Higher Spiritual Works

The wonderful healings, restorations, and displays of mastery over nature which were reviewed in Chapter IV were regarded as "signs" or tokens of the divine glory of Christ—as proofs of his being in very truth the Son of God. This further meaning may also be found in them, that they were symbols or expressions of the spiritual changes and marvels which he would accomplish in human nature and character. These spiritual works, far superior to the physical or material deeds of power, since they are wrought in the ever-persisting souls of people, the Master now proceeds to unfold in his great final or farewell discourses with the disciples, and then intercedes for their victorious progress in their years of work on earth and in the service of the countless followers who are to gather to him till the end of time.

Gospel Parts Covered

The study of the seven great signs or miracles of the Fourth Gospel has led into all the chapters from the second to the eleventh, except chapters three, seven, eight

and ten. Now, with the two chapters twelve and thirteen taken up with the coming to Bethany and the experiences of the passover meal, the present chapter will cover the wonderful table-land of this Gospel from chapter fourteen to chapter seventeen, so that in the fourth and fifth chapters of the text-book a comprehensive survey of the main parts of the Fourth Gospel will have been made.

Six Subjects This material, than which there is none richer in the whole Bible, may perhaps best be grasped if the thought is gathered under six leading subjects.

1. Jesus the Way to God

The Only Way One of the great sayings of our Lord is found early in these chapters: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). There is a desire in the human heart to come into living touch with God. This hunger is not satisfied in the faiths of vast numbers of our race. Hinduism is pantheistic: God is everything and everything is God. In essence Brahma, the highest divine concept, is energy, and all intermediate deities and idols avail not to give the souls of India's millions a sense of contact with God. Buddhism has taken different directions in different lands; but it is a faith which seeks to quench desire rather than to satisfy it, and consigns the personal life to extinction. Confucianism is atheistic or at least agnostic with respect to God, and

rests practically content with guiding man in his relations to others in this world. Mohammedanism exalts one God, but he is viewed as a stern and solitary autocrat, with whom men can have no intimacy. Says one writer: "In the Koran there are ninety-nine names for God, but father is not one of them." Even Judaism is not bringing to the hearts of the Hebrew people a sense of God so real and adequate to life's needs that they are satisfied; and therefore multitudes of them are found in the arid lands of atheism and materialism. Jesus, as the author of the Christian faith, is the only way to God bringing men of all conditions and races the satisfaction of their hunger for the divine.

[2]

Through Jesus a Person

The weakness of the faiths other than Christ's way of life which have been mentioned is that they would solve the problem of man's victory over evil and union with God by rules and practices. See the threefold or fourfold "way" of some of them, or the practice of prayer five times a day by Mohammedans. But Jesus asks us, in our effort to find and to know God, to come to himself, to give allegiance and love to him as a person; and then only as aids to our new life to grasp certain spiritual truths and to fix on certain lines of action and service. "Come unto me" (Matt. 11:28). "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). "Have I been so long time with you,

and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The Way of the Cross

Jesus has made the way open to God through his sacrificial giving of his life for mankind. "The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51). "The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). Not until the fact of sin has been met can man enter into vital relations with God. But now Christ "hath been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26).

Souls Thirsting and Supplied

There can be seen a succession of souls that have attained saintship as the Christian centuries have gone by. For any church to canonize them would seem an impertinence. They are chosen by the consensus of the whole body of believers of many generations who aspire to completeness of Christian character. In the era pointing toward modern life we may start with Francis of Assisi, seven hundred years ago. Central in his experience was the desire to be like Christ; and one of his biographers writes of him at his death that "he passed away to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he loved with his whole heart, with his whole mind, his whole soul, his whole strength, his most ardent desire and fullest affection, following him most perfectly, running after him most sweetly, and at the last reaching him most gloriously." One need not ask by what path Thomas à Kempis found his

thirst for God supplied when his immortal book is recalled as entitled *The Imitation of Christ*.

Roll of Christ Lovers Many exalted lives that shine with a divine radiance crowd the centuries that stand nearer to our time, and of those there may be selected John Bunyan, Madame Guyon, Zinzendorf, whose flaming words reveal his devotion to Christ, "I have but one passion—it is he, he only," David Brainerd, Charles G. Finney, J. Hudson Taylor, and Andrew Murray. Does the impulse or aspiration come to the student or reader of these lines to unite with such as these who have had the God-thirst and have found its satisfaction? Then yield up all to Jesus, for he is the way.

[3]

2. The Holy Spirit the Revealer and Comforter

Selective Intuition of John The portion of the Gospel of John which we are considering is exceedingly rich in truth, and covers some of the crowning operations or offices of the Holy Spirit. Out of all that the Holy Spirit is disclosed in the Bible as doing these chapters of the Fourth Gospel appear to assemble those which are most typical of John's own nature. As the author of the last book of the New Testament, he is often called the Revelator; and in all his writings he shows a remarkable power of unveiling the deep, hidden treasures of the spiritual realm. He is possessed of a sense of certitude because the things of Christ have been

made known to him personally by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will deal faithfully with the world, and all that the believer needs will be progressively unfolded. John's own attitude of assurance is in keeping with what his soul gathers from these closing utterances of the Master. His Lord had caused his chosen ones to see, during these final hours before he suffered, that the Holy Spirit was to be peculiarly the Revealer. The action of the Holy Spirit as Revealer may be viewed under three clearly defined heads:

**Convincer and
Witness**

Beginning with these who are most remote from God, the Spirit convicts or convinces "the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). It is only when hearts are convinced of their failure to recognize the sovereignty and the sacrificing love of Christ, when they see the sufficiency and the acceptance of his atoning work, and when they have faith that through him the evil one is discredited and can be defeated that they reach the ground where Christ can save them. This is the essence of John 16:9-11. The channel of this miraculous and necessary work of the Spirit for those who are without is found in those who are already disciples of Christ. They "bear witness" (John 15:27) by the very joy of their spirit, the light of their eyes, the assured tones of their voices, the evidently satisfying rest of their souls; but this could not possibly bring conviction to those who need it even though the Word of God is being presented, without the coöperating witness

work of the Spirit. Dr. R. A. Torrey says: "It explains why it is that when you have shown a man the truth about Christ over and over again and he has seen nothing, suddenly it all bursts upon him, and he sees and believes. The Spirit has borne his witness to Christ. It was not merely Peter's words about Christ that convinced the Jews of the truth concerning Christ on the day of Pentecost. It was the Spirit himself bearing witness. If you wish men to see the truth about Christ, do not depend upon your own powers of expression and persuasion, but cast yourself upon the Holy Spirit and seek for them his testimony and see to it that they put themselves in a place where the Spirit can testify."¹

Teacher and Guide

Christ assures his own that in the Holy Spirit they will have a Teacher, and that one part of his teaching ministry is the bringing to remembrance all that Christ himself taught (John 14:26). This latter service had a marvelous fulfillment in the creation of the four Gospels, and the general teaching work of the Spirit has entered into the creeds, sermons, literature, and instructional activity of the Church. The Holy Spirit is also an individual and communal Guide, and in this function has had a part in shaping personal sainthood as well as all Christian organization, government, and enterprise. Especially has the Spirit directed the modern missionary development (John 16:13a).

¹What the Bible Teaches, 247.

Illuminator The crowning work of the Holy Spirit is indicated in these words: "He shall declare unto the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:13b, 14). Dr. G. P. Eckman observes: "No limit can be placed upon the development of the thought of seekers after truth under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit."¹

Comforter Alongside the work of the Holy Spirit as Revealer is his ministry as Comforter, disclosed chiefly in John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7. While the term Paraclete means Advocate, it carries the idea of one called to the side of another, and hence contains the thought of support, aid, comfort. Dr. J. S. Candlish notes that, above all, the Holy Spirit's "agency as Comforter reveals his love. For this work has to do with men as liable to dejection, trouble, and sorrow; and has for its object to relieve these painful affections, and to fill our souls with joy. Now this can proceed from nothing but love."²

[4]

3. Interrelations of Divine and Human Life

Warmth of Triune Truth In these closing utterances of Jesus as given by John there appear in greater clearness than in any other part of the Scriptures phases of truth that cause the

¹Studies in the Gospel of John, Part II, 157.

²The Work of the Holy Spirit, 112.

Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to be seen in their interrelations; and give us the sense of what may be called the social warmth of the triune truth concerning God. If we take continental United States as a fair testing-ground, why are there over forty million members of communions that hold to the trinitarian faith, and only about seventy thousand members of those who profess the unitarian, or five hundred and eighty-five to one? There is firm ground for claiming that the chief reason is the warm, winning influence upon human hearts of triune truth, and the cold, repellant impression produced by a belief which rules out the interrelations of the Father, Son, and Spirit as co-equal in the one God; and also because normal men are incurably social and demand therefore a social and not a solitary God. When Christ, in these discourses, can say: "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 14:11); or "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28); or once more, when he can say: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me" (John 16:26), we feel there is a center of warm social interaction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and God is brought near to us.

• **Communion
with God**

In these heart-to-heart words with his chosen ones the Master discloses the deep interrelations which may exist

between God and the Christians: "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). John Owen, a Puritan writer, brought out some remarkable ideas in his classic on *Communion with God*, showing that our communion may be distinguished with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

**Vine and
Branches**

One striking symbol of interrelated life between the divine Christ and each soul that partakes of his saving power is given in the passage at the beginning of chapter fifteen. Both life and fruit are conditioned upon our abiding in Christ. In any measure in which we are severed or separated from Christ, in that measure our new life diminishes and our fruit-bearing decreases. Love is the means by which we are more fully joined to Christ in living communion, as may be seen in the next section. Sin cherished or allowed to remain in the heart is that which tends to sever us from the Vine.

[5]

4. Love, the Unifier

**The New
Commandment**

After the last supper of Christ with his chosen apostles and the withdrawal of Judas, Jesus gave forth his opening declaration showing how love was to mark the relation between his disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you that ye love one another . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples

if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35). Dr. J. G. K. McClure sees clearly the things in the individual which love must overcome. "The heart in which love abounds is a blessed heart. Generous instincts and gracious forgiveness are in it. Tender sympathies are in it. It has no place for envies and jealousies, anger and malice, hatreds and grudges, every little and every large unlovingness are crowded out of the heart. Our world would become unspeakably sweet and helpful if in all Christian hearts loving-kindness abounded."¹

Oneness of Believers

The ideal of Christ is the unity of those who bear his name: "That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me" (John 17:21-23). A deeper desire and a more clamant appeal for unity is felt and heard in the Christian ranks throughout the world at this time than at any previous period; and many preliminary movements and direct efforts to achieve it have already arisen. In the mission field, where apparently our forces are more nearly fulfilling Christ's marching orders than in the home-lands and

¹Intercessory Prayer, 70.

where nearly all the distinctions that are magnified at home have no meaning, love as a unifier has won its greatest triumphs. The path of unity at home is blocked by the fixedness of denominational peculiarities and the lack of a pervasive Christlike purpose and soul-winning objective of such strength that love can dissolve the differences and bring all disciples of our Lord into one. Rivalries of place, position, perquisites, and prestige, clashings of ambition and self-seeking, reveal to the outside world that the Saviour's commandment and prayer have not yet proved effectual against the natural tendencies of the human heart. When love shall overcome these unchristian motives and manifestations, so that all Christians truly love each other, they will present a unity that will cause the kingdom to come with power.

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5. The Power-house of Victorious Faith

Saved to Serve To what end is it that Jesus is to us the way to God, that the Holy Spirit is our teacher, guide, and illuminator, that we are in communion with God, and that a supernatural, divine love infused into our hearts leads us out in sympathy and interest toward others? It is that we may bring forth fruit abundantly, that we may serve. Service to others, especially in the higher range of winning those to Christ who have not known him and leading those who are his to apprehend their larger

possibilities, is the aspiration of every healthy, normal disciple. Yet soul winning and upbuilding is utterly beyond us in our human wisdom and strength. But from these wonderful closing words of our Lord, promises and passages gleam out which reveal the inflow of spiritual force into our field. Prayer and faith become a dynamo, and new power is generated that brings victory.

New Currents through One Life Louisa Vaughan has unfolded the story of how her faith and prayer fixed on the two promises: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will

I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (John 14:13, 14). As she faced a class of untrained mothers in China, and saw that it was impossible to quicken their dull minds and care-burdened souls, she asked for awakening and vital influences to come at once to them through the Holy Spirit, and unusual experiences came. Far more widely has extended the power answering to her victorious faith, including the transformation of Ding Li Mei, who developed from a formal pastor into a flaming evangelist and almost unmatched intercessor.¹

Fulness of Assurance Other promises shine out like luminaries through these chapters: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7); "All things whatsoever the Father hath

¹Answered or Unanswered? Miracles of Faith in China, Chapters I, I.

are mine: therefore said I, that he [the Holy Spirit] taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:15); "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye ask anything of the Father, he will give it to you in my name" (John 16:23). In the life of George Mueller there appears the working of a victorious principle, "that it might be seen, by the whole world and the whole Church that God listens to prayer," his orphan homes alone receiving nearly seven million dollars and caring for about ten thousand children during his lifetime. Not less remarkable are the resources and achievements of faith and prayer in our own times, operative in all departments of our life physical and spiritual, both at home and in mission lands, and engaging a large variety of individuals and organizations.

[7]

6. Intercession in Christ and in His Disciples

Sphere of Intercession Andrew Murray declares: "Christ the Intercessor is our life; he is our Head, and we are his body; his Spirit and life breathe in us. As in heaven so on earth, intercession is God's chosen channel of blessing. Let us learn from Christ what glory there is in it; the way to exercise this wondrous power; the part it is to take in work for God."¹ At the close of the discourses we read, "These things spake Jesus" (John 17:1). He had poured out his heart to his own; the utmost that words could

¹Ministry of Intercession, 136.

convey, had been spoken. "And lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said" (John 17:1). Then follows the intercessory prayer. After all the parables, miracles, words, and deeds, nothing was so fitting with which to bring to a close his mighty ministry as intercession. In one of the stanzas of her poem on the work of those who intercede Frances Ridley Havergal has these lines of deep insight:

They hold the master-key
That opens all the fulness
Of God's great treasury.

Host of Disciple Intercessors

There has been a marvelous change since Isaiah could write that God "wondered that there was no intercessor" (Isa. 59:16); for the true intercessors, those who are fervently lifting up others to God in prayer, have become a great host. Many outstanding missionary men and women are such. Still more are among those who in the home-lands "hold the ropes" to sustain the missionary forces. Others are calling down heavenly currents that turn the tide at many a difficult center of home effort. Latest and best is a vision that an army of shut-in souls can be enlisted, directed, nurtured, cheered, and caused to feel that life has taken on for them a splendid objective, as they bear the whole round world up in their intercessions. Victoria Wellman, whose heart has long yearned over every sequestered, lonely brother or sister, broadly defines the inclusive lines: "We use the term shut-ins to describe a class whose

lives find little or no chance to be actively serving, or doing great things, or sharing in the pleasures and successes of life. We include the old, some of whom are very lonely, and the afflicted. Can these tortured lives be ministers of love, joy, and peace, and pray the very victories of God upon far distant lands? It is a world-wide ministry and never more needed than now.”¹

Suggestive Questions

1. What twofold meaning may be applied to the word “signs” in evidence of Christ being the Son of God?

2. Why are faiths other than Christianity unsatisfying?

3. Show the significance of the person of Christ in his way of salvation.

4.* What is involved in the principle of the cross?

5. Do you clearly see how we bear witness and how the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ?

6. Is what is stated as “the warmth of triune truth” confirmed in your experience?

7.* What do you regard as the three most harmful things dividing Christians?

8. Is soul winning and upbuilding in any real sense your interest or your passion?

9.* How fully can you define intercession as distinct from prayer in general?

10.* In what fields is intercession working most effectually?

¹The Intercessor, September, 1920.

**CLUSTERS FROM THE VINE OF
REDEEMING GRACE**

FIRST CLUSTER—THE WILL OR DOING

Will of God, Commandment, Overcome, Victory,
Righteousness, Good, Walk, Abide

SECOND CLUSTER—THE MIND OR KNOWING

Manifested, Word, Truth, Faith, Believe, Confess,
Witness, Promise, Assure, Know

THIRD CLUSTER—THE HEART OR LOVING

Life, Light, Love, Like, Hope, Pure, Fellowship,
Fellow Workers, Eternal Life

DAILY READINGS

- [1] 1 John 1:1-10
- [2] 1 John 2:1-17
- [3] 1 John 3:13-24
- [4] 1 John 4:15-21
- [5] 1 John 5:1-21
- [6] 2 John vs. 1-13
- [7] 3 John vs. 1-14

CHAPTER VI

CLUSTERS FROM THE VINE OF REDEEMING GRACE

[1]

Date and Aim of John's Epistles Concerning the dates of the three Epistles of John Professor D. A. Hayes says: "The Second and Third Epistles of John are not second and third in time, but in importance. They doubtless were written in some earlier period of John's ministry in Ephesus. The First Epistle of John is the last message from God to man contained in the Sacred Scriptures."¹ It is the view of many scholars that John's first Epistle was written soon after his Gospel, and assists the aim of that Gospel in establishing the deity of Christ and the reality of his incarnation and atoning work and in confuting dangerous errors.

For Three Provinces of the Soul John has a remarkable vocabulary in which comparatively few terms, simple in form but charged with a great weight of meaning, are used over and over again. This feature stands out in his Epistles preeminently. Instead of treating these terms apart from each other, we gather them together in this chap-

¹John and His Writings, 176.

ter on the three Johannine Epistles in groups that are like clusters of grapes from the vine of Christ's redeeming work. There are found three groups of ideas or truths in each of which the several terms seem to show a kinship. The members of the first of these groups are clustered about the faculty of will; those of the second group gather to the general idea or stem of knowledge; while those of the third group show emotion at their center. Thus the three great provinces of the soul are covered.

First Cluster—The Will or Doing

WILL OF GOD, COMMANDMENT, OVERCOME, VICTORY,
 RIGHTEOUSNESS, GOOD, WALK, ABIDE

Will of God

One of the greatest Christians of all the centuries since the time of the Apostles was Augustine, who lived from 354 to 430 A. D. Many place him next to Paul in his vision, personality, and thought. He was converted at the age of thirty-four through the prayers and influence of his mother, Monica, and the preaching of Bishop Ambrose at Milan. One of his most remarkable sayings is in these words: "Grant what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt." A student of Augustine has said that this is "his crystallized expression of the true attitude of the surrendered soul toward God." John's idea seems still deeper: "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (Ch. 2:17)¹

¹In this Chapter the abbreviation Ch. refers to the First Epistle of John.

The will of God is the source of all moral and spiritual authority in the universe. The soul that gets back into the will of God and harmonizes the whole nature with it encompasses in that one act the essence of all law and all commandments. The standing of such a soul is so secure that it is said that the person "abideth forever."

[2]

Commandment The word commandment, both singular and plural, occurs eighteen times in John's Epistles. As we study the passages and see the connections, it becomes plain that what John has in mind is not at all what we know as the Mosaic decalogue; nor is it the new law of love taught by Christ, although that is among the meanings. One passage reads: "This is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, even as he gave us commandment" (Ch. 3:23). All the background of the incarnation, teaching, and work of Christ enters into the essence of the idea of what God commands; as if John would sum it up in the word which came out of the cloud at the transfiguration: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5).

Overcome Different writers have called John a mystic and his writings mystical. This does not mean that he is mysterious or obscure. It means first of all that he is intensely spiritual; that he loves to lead us directly to God and into all the highest and holiest truth that can be known. So Profes-

sor D. A. Hayes says of John: "He was a mystic in the best sense of that term . . . In the ancient Church the flying eagle was his symbol. The eagle symbolized inspiration, aspiration, exaltation, heavenly-mindedness, and holiness . . . So the Eagle-Evangelist rises to loftier spiritual heights than any other writer in our New Testament."¹ Another writer observes: "God's nature seems more akin to the mystical side of man's nature. He is Love, not Logic; and the soul, made in the image of God, meets God intuitively." This then is the final and deeper meaning of the mystical spirit which we see in John. It seeks to know God directly by intuition. This can be done only by full preparation and contemplation, in which there is a death to sin and the self-life.

Victory John says: "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one" (Ch. 2:14). Again, he declares: "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (Ch. 5:4). Young people should not conclude that the overcoming and victorious life is beyond them any more than beyond Francis of Assisi, Madame Guyon, David Brainerd, Henry Martyn, Frances E. Willard, S. D. Gordon, and many others who attained spiritual victory in their early years. Dr. C. M. Addison, rector of St. John's Church, Stamford, Connecticut, who has made a careful study of mysticism, to bring out phases of it which may help the churches, shows how

¹John and His Writings, 67.

an epochal experience may come to the seeking heart: "Then some day the dam bursts and the water of life floods the soul. If the breaking of the dam stands for the crumbling of the old and lower self, it stands much more for the influx of the new self, the new man in Christ Jesus. It is victory."¹

Righteousness The result in any life of having the will of God deeply enthroned within the soul, so that it becomes the ever-active, all-inclusive commandment, not of authority but of love, will be righteous action which is righteousness. This is not imputed righteousness, such as Paul sometimes describes (Rom. 4:5), but personal righteousness, which appears in righteous doing and then becomes embodied in righteous character; so that John declares: "He that doeth righteousness is righteous" (Ch. 3:7). The opposite of righteousness is sin, and this is emphasized when John says, "All unrighteousness is sin" (Ch. 5:17).

Good Good and evil form a set of opposites, in the thought of John, being a somewhat more inclusive doublet than righteousness and sin. In his third Epistle he is speaking of the harmful course of one from whom Christian conduct might be expected. Then he uplifts the standard and draws the distinction: "Beloved imitate not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: he that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 John vs. 11).

¹The Theory and Practice of Mysticism, 47.

Walk The last two words in the cluster of the will or doing are among the most beautiful in the group; and at their first occurrence in John's first Epistle they are interlinked: "He that saith he abideth in him [Christ] ought himself also to walk even as he walked" (Ch. 2:6). Walk refers to the steady tenor of the life, and while John does not use the word often, it occurs two or three times in each of his three Epistles. The Apostle inclines to use it in connection with truth, as: "Greater joy have I none than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth" (3 John vs. 4).

Abide John uses this word respecting the Christian about twenty times in his first and second Epistles; and it is really a wonderful term, expressing the settled inclination, the unbroken victory, the permanent attitude of one whose will has become attuned to the will of God. Dr. James Mudge, in presenting in 1913 the experience of sixteen "people of eminence, whose achievements in the world have been very marked," makes this observation: "All have a passionate devotion to the will divine . . . the welcoming of the will of God. He who has learned to do this promptly and heartily has mastered the secret of the highest, happiest life." Carefully consider some of the sayings he quotes in the light of each life-work: Adoniram Judson, "Do all from the will of God;" Stephen Olin, "His will is mine, mine is swallowed up in his;" William E. Gladstone, "In his will is our peace;" Frances Ridley Havergal, "He has granted

me fully to rejoice in his will;" General Charles George Gordon, "When you bow to the will of God you die to the world;" Catherine Booth, "Not my will but thine be done."¹

[3]

Second Cluster—The Mind or Knowing

MANIFESTED, WORD, TRUTH, FAITH, BELIEVE,
CONFESS, WITNESS, PROMISE, ASSURE, KNOW

Connections of Ideas

There is a statement of Christ, as given in the Fourth Gospel, that points the way in our passing from the first cluster of ideas to the second: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching" (John 7:17). First, we will; then, second, we know. The stem which binds this second cluster of ten ideas or principles together is John's sense of the absolute certitude which ought to fill the heart of the Christian concerning the reality of Jesus Christ his Lord and the disciple's standing in him.

Manifested

Christ is manifested as the Son of God and Saviour (Ch. 1:1, 2), and God's love in sending him for our salvation has been manifested (Ch. 4:9). The full purpose of Christ's incarnation has now been revealed, so that the marvelous goodness and outreaching of God for the race have become clear to all who have any receptiveness.

Word

If in any real sense God's Word is in us (Ch. 1:10; if even more, it abides in us (Ch. 2:

¹Religious Experience, 7, 16, 32, 60, 72, 81, 124.

14 and we keep it (Ch. 2:5) the rich soil is prepared from which all faith and spiritual enrichment can grow.

True, the Truth Souls thus prepared are walking through a beautiful lane, where grow the things which are true (Ch. 2:8, 27) and the presence is felt of Christ, who is true (Ch. 5:26). This lane issues into a rare and wondrous park—the truth (Ch. 2:21; 3:18, 19; 4:6; 2 John vs. 1, 4; 3 John vs. 4, 12), producing still more glorious trees and plants of the righteous order.

Faith The greatest single step, attitude, or faculty by which we securely lay hold of our inheritance in Christ is faith, and this mighty agency is spoken of directly once in John's Epistles: "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (Ch. 5:4).

Believe The word through which faith is shown to be related to the mind and to the act of knowing is "believe," and John uses it at least once in this sense in his first Epistle when he says: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God" (Ch. 4:1). But at other points the Epistle shows the deeper meaning of the term: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him" (Ch. 5:10).

Confess There is a boldness in faith, when it is of the right fiber, that results in flinging itself at the foe in flaming words of confession. "Thou comest to me," said David to Goliath, "with a sword,

and with a spear, and with a javelin: but I come to you in the name of Jehovah of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied" (1 Sam. 17: 45). Abednego spoke for the three Hebrew young men, in the presence of the awful fiery furnace which stood as their fate: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan. 3:16-18). Luther cried out, when the perils of his path were held up as if to deter him: "Though there be as many devils in Worms as tiles in the roofs, I will enter."¹ The martyrs have been called confessors, and Huss, Ridley, Latimer, the brave lads of Uganda, and many others form a shining company. Reader of these lines, are you an intrepid confessor of Christ? To this John summons you (Chs. 2:23; 4:2, 15), who was himself, along with Peter, a bold confessor of his Master before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:13-20).

[4]

Witness There are a few instances in which John in his Epistles uses the thought of bearing witness for our part in confirming the word or work of God or of our fellow men (3 John vs. 3, 6, 12). Used concerning God's work it means the same

¹Henry E. Jacobs, Martin Luther, 185.

as our being confessors, as unfolded in the paragraph immediately preceding. But it is the other meaning, in which God in some way confirms or authenticates his purpose and provision in Christ toward us, that forms a precious and strengthening member of the cluster we are considering. It is somewhat like confirming his word with an oath, mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 6:13-18). So John speaks of the threefold witness that is provided: "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood," by which God "hath borne witness concerning his Son" (Ch. 5:8, 9). God's witness of the Spirit to the Son is in his giving "the Spirit without measure" to him (John 3:34). The witness of the water is that, at Christ's baptism, the approving voice of God came saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The witness to Christ's atoning work, or to his blood which was shed on the cross, was in his resurrection, when God "raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:20). The threefold interior or personal witness to the believer implied in the words, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him" (Ch. 5:10), that is, in himself, makes the confidence of the Christian still more complete, for the Spirit can breathe acceptance into his heart, the water of baptism can speak of his union with Christ, and the blood can free the soul from the weight of sin.

Promise Next to the factor of witness is its close mate in the cluster, that of promise; and

very rich and luscious it appears, as we read: "And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal" (Ch. 2:25). Dr. George Bowen says: "Not that we shall be exempt from loss, disappointment, sickness, human unkindness, embarrassment, vexation, humiliation; not that we shall have in this world all the displays of providential favor on which we may have calculated; these are not the things promised. But . . . he that believeth hath eternal life."

Assure What we have been moving toward, in this grape-cluster from the vine of our salvation, is absolute assurance, and at one point we find this very word "assure" used by John: "Hereby shall we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him" (Ch. 3:19).

Know The last and largest of the grapes in this second cluster is the word "know." Taken in a spiritual sense of the sureness with which the believer can speak of his consciousness of God and of Christ the Son, and of both his standing and his understanding as a Christian, it is used in the first Epistle of John twenty-one times. Among the exalted meanings of the word is that which says: "Ye know the Father" (Ch. 2:13); "Hereby we know that we know him" [Christ] (Ch. 2:3); "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God" (Ch. 4:2); "Hereby we know that we abide in him [Christ] and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit" (Ch. 4:14); "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye all know" that is, know the truth (Ch. 2:20, margin).

[5]

Third Cluster—The Heart or Loving

LIFE, LIGHT, LOVE, LIKE, HOPE, PURE, FELLOWSHIP,
FELLOW WORKERS, ETERNAL LIFE

Order of Our Advance The right transition from the second cluster to the third is seen in these words from John's first Epistle: "He that loveth not knoweth not" (Ch. 4:8); or to put it in the familiar positive formula, "To know him is to love him." The central or stem idea of the third cluster is Love. Life comes first because of that wonderful statement in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." The primary or initial factor of spiritual life can be looked at in the beginning apart from eternal life at the close of the series, for that includes all the factors and all the clusters as the issue of the whole work of salvation.

Life Of the three Epistles of John only the first contains the word life, and putting aside for the present the occurrences of "eternal life," there are seven places where the word life is found. Of course, John clothed this word with meanings distinct from love, and yet not so far away from love that it falls outside the love-cluster. John opens the Epistle with a wonderful sentence in which he tells of the life "which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (Ch. 1:2). This was the Incarnation of the Son, and he came into the world at the dictate of love and

as a missionary to the race. In the midst of the Epistle John writes: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (Ch. 3:16). This is "First John three sixteen," and like the other illustrious verse has enshrined within it the truth of the Atonement, Christ's sacrificial giving of his life for us, which is the supreme expression of divine love. In one aspect this verse goes beyond the other in that it links us with Christ and calls us to make the love-offering of our lives in any way that service to mankind requires. Dr. F. B. Meyer brings life into the love-cluster when he says: "If you do not love, you are dead. 'He that loveth not, abideth in death' (Ch. 3:14). The light sparkle of intellectual or emotional life may light up your words, and fascinate your immediate circle of friends, but there will be no life toward God. Love is the perfect tense of live. Whosoever does not love does not live in the deepest sense."

Light The general meaning of light as used by John in his first Epistle is divine approval, the radiance which shines around one's path when a person is in God's favor. This relation is seen in this verse in the Psalms: "They walk, O Jehovah, in the light of thy countenance" (Psa. 89:15). Such a sense may be felt in the words: "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light" (Ch. 2:10). This may be deepened till it is filled with the intimacy of God's proprietorship in us, when it becomes the light of holiness, a term which John does not use in his Epistles. Here

belongs this passage: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (Ch. 1:7). Victoria Wellman has pointed out the true path for those who would find a satisfying light in which to walk; "Trust that you are not left to discover new or better lights, but are led to fuller joy in the Light of the World—Jesus. No new paths that seem free from stumbling-stones need you seek, because he leads every honest, loving heart into highways of holiness, no matter from what churchly pasture or how fenced or walled by creeds."

[6]

Love The first Epistle of John has been called "The Epistle of Love," and this is well borne out when love is revealed in its variations as used fifty-one times. The word and forms of it are also found four times in John's second Epistle and six times in his third Epistle. If all of these passages, from the sublimest cosmical declarations down to the softest and most tender flutings, could be woven together by a great musical genius into an oratorio like Gaul's "Holy City" it would be a fitting presentation of the range and beauty of John's love-revelation in these letters. The first premonitory strain would be sounded in these words: "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected" (Ch. 2:5). The full mighty motif and chorus with which the main theme would enchain our souls would find voice when this passage should be reached: "Behold what manner

of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God, and such we are" (Ch. 3:1). But the deepest, most thrilling and exquisite part of the oratorio would be that which in multiplied variations would interpret these words: "We love, because he first loved us" (Ch. 3:19). Multitudes of lovers will understand this: you love, because the love of another heart came and surprised you, enwrapped you, overwhelmed you, and awoke your love. So God has come, and never is our love to him complete till we respond to his unfathomable love with the tender, passionate intensity of that which we know as the highest human love. Those who have felt that love to God the Father, to Christ the Son, are to us the saints and star souls of the ages.

God's Lovers

These words are written of a medieval lover of God: "Beginning at the very beginning, she tells this Lover, as in some delightful confidence, that the first gift he gave her was Life." Then she counts them up to "the seventh, Love himself, for God is Love."¹ Samuel Rutherford uses many expressions like these from his letters, and simply on this account the Scotch preacher of three hundred years ago is immortal: "The sweetness of his love! Christ has come, and run away to heaven with my heart and my love. I think that a soul could live eternally blessed only on Christ's love and feed upon no other thing." Hester Alway, a present-day Bible teacher, speaks the same language, so it is not a matter

¹Edward Hutton, *Studies in the Lives of the Saints*, 81, 82.

of time but of the soul that loves Christ: "O on thee may our love be lavished, thee first, thee always! Yes, to love is to understand the beloved. O to know the enslavement of love!"¹ Again Victoria Wellman has here the reasoned insight and link with life: "O love, love, love! If mere natural human experience in the reality of love can transform and illuminate, consider the reality of a divine love, the supernatural experience that transforms soul and body. There comes a light in the eyes—the heart knows its Beloved. If once you 'fall in love with God' you will have such joy that people will notice your glad face."²

[7]

Like Love always reaches back into a basis of likeness, and natures that love and live together grow more like each other. It is not strange, therefore, to find John writing: "We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (Ch. 3:2).

Hope But in that age, as in many another reaching down to the present, the confident expectation and earnest desire of many of Christ's followers that he should be manifested have not been satisfied by his return. A perpetual strand of hope has entwined itself in the texture of Christian history.

Pure The effect of this longing on the part of Christians for their Lord's manifestation has been to purify them from earthly ambitions, gloryings, and

¹The Gospel of Love, 66.

²Victory Department, The Gideon, June, 1918, p. 33.

passions. John shows the working of these two members of the love-cluster when he follows the verse on our anticipated likeness to Christ with this statement: "And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (Ch. 3:3).

Fellowship An immediate result of the transformation which makes the believer even here akin to God and Christ is fellowship. Love mightily works for fellowship. Holiness, which has been compared to the very light which irradiates the divine nature, fits the soul for converse with God as nothing else can do. So it is most natural that "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (Ch. 1:3).

Fellow Workers Unity of heart and communion in experience always lead to coöperation in good works on the part of Christians, as can be seen in countless religious and missionary organizations. Thus we become "fellow-workers for the truth" (3 John vs. 8).

Eternal Life The outlines of the great idea or goal of eternal life will be more fully sketched in the closing chapter,¹ but the one aspect that can here be stressed is that the real substance of the immortal state and society of the redeemed children of God consists in the complete victory and unadulterated reign of love. The very nature of the God of love secures such an end. "This is the true God and eternal life" (Ch. 5:20).

¹See pages 159-164 of this text-book.

Suggestive Questions

1. Name five points of style or language in which the first Epistle of John shows a likeness to the Fourth Gospel.
2. Can you see any reason why this Epistle should follow and strengthen the message of John's Gospel rather than precede and introduce it?
- 3.* Are the churches failing to use a right form of the mystical element, while outside movements become attractive through it?
4. In what way is a "surrendered soul" or a will accordant with God's will a condition of knowing?
- 5.* Can one reasonably say that John in his first Epistle uses "believe" both for mental discernment and for heart trust?
6. What do you understand is assured to believers in the words: "Ye have an anointing from the Holy One, and ye all know" (1 John 2:20 margin, which seems the real meaning)?
7. What type of love must be in those who attain saintship, as seen by hearts that aspire to nearness to God?
- 8.* What is the strength and what the weakness of the hope of Christ's near advent?
9. What is to you the finest example in present-day life of a love that produces fellowship?
- 10.* After reading verses eight and nine of John's third Epistle, ask what can remove the evils of jealousy and a desire for preeminence from the ranks of fellow workers.

WARRING POWERS OF GOOD AND EVIL

1. Keys to the Sealed Book of Revelation
2. The Living and All-Conquering Christ
3. Marks of a Faithful and a Failing Church
4. Types of Gigantic Powers of Evil
5. Resources of Good for the Defeat of Evil
6. The City Symbolic of Victory and Peace
7. The Bride Symbolic of Purity, Love, and Fidelity

DAILY READINGS

- [1] Rev. 1:1-8
- [2] Rev. 1:9-20
- [3] Rev. 2:1-17; 3:14-22
- [4] Rev. 13:1-8
- [5] Rev. 5:1-14
- [6] Rev. 21:15-23; 22:1-5
- [7] Rev. 21:1-14; 22:14-17

CHAPTER VII

WARRING POWERS OF GOOD AND EVIL

[1]

1. Keys to the Sealed Book of Revelation

Baffling

Bible Book

The term Revelation is often applied to the whole Bible, or perhaps more exactly to the truth or will of God communicated to the human race in the Bible. But in the American Revised Version the last book of the Bible is entitled "The Revelation of John." The term here stands for the word Apocalypse, which signifies something unveiled, and designates a piece of writing of a peculiar type. No book of the Bible has proved so difficult to be understood, so baffling to the body of Christians through all its history, as this book at the close of the New Testament, ordinarily called The Revelation or The Apocalypse. Almost every feature respecting it has been open to difference of view, such as whether the John mentioned in it as author is the Apostle John; whether the date of its writing is in the reign of Vespasian, about 77 A. D., or in the reign of Domitian, about 96 A. D.; whether the things revealed in it were counted to be near at hand when it was written, or were regarded as stretching through a long period of time then future; and, most of all, whether

its complex imagery of seals, trumpets, bowls, and various living creatures are simply the symbolism of an apocalyptic writer or whether they mean actual historical events and personages. The right determination of these questions will supply some of the keys by which the mystery of this book may be solved, and will remove the sense of strangeness from it which makes it a sealed book.

Authorship of the Apostle

An experienced writer, C. Anderson Scott, says: "It is plain from the book itself, and in particular from the Letters to the Seven Churches, that the author was one who occupied a position of unusual prominence and authority in the churches of Western Asia Minor. Of what John, except the apostle, could that be said in relation to all of these seven scattered churches?" Then he unites his judgment with that of another able scholar in the view that either John the Apostle wrote this book or else John was never at Ephesus.¹ After fully canvassing and weighing all evidence and arguments pro and con Dr. Beckwith decides: "The balance of argument then leads to the conclusion that the apostle's sojourn in Asia [the province where Ephesus is located] is probably a historic fact."² We may therefore rest in the view that St. John wrote the Book of Revelation.

Date of Writing

Dr. Hayes says: "The present tendency is to go back to the date set

¹New-Century Bible (Rev.) 35, 36.

²The Apocalypse of John, 393.

by Irenæus and the other church fathers, somewhere between A.D. 90 and 96, in the reign of Domitian."¹ Students now see that not until this period was it clear that there was to be a life and death struggle between the growing Christian movement and the Roman empire. In Domitian was found one who hated Christians as such and was bound to oppress and accuse them wherever found, and to demand that they show their loyalty by joining in emperor-worship in places where this cult was established. The Jews had been excused from this by a special law, but no tolerance was permitted toward this new sect. Death (Rev. 2:13), banishment (Rev. 1:9), loss of goods, or other penalty seemed to impend over every true disciple.

Answer of the Spirit to Force

Whoever can feel the situation of the small struggling Church of that time, scattered through that one wide domain held in the grasp of Rome so that escape was impossible, and can see that little community of souls linked in their devotion to Christ pitted against the implacable emperor with all the force of the empire in his hand to be used against them, grasps the real key to the Apocalypse. It is, however complex it appears, a single, unitary, splendid and flaming answer of the spirit to the challenge thrust forward by force. All of its symbolism says only one thing: Good is victor over evil; Christ is mightier than force. The book was the word for that time; but also for all time.

¹John and His Writings, 246.

[2]

2. The Living and All-Conquering Christ

**The Exile of the
Burning Heart**

According to the view of Sir William M. Ramsay, St. John's banishment to the island of Patmos, about sixty miles southwest of Ephesus,¹ was no mild penalty imposed upon the aged apostle as leader of the Christian body in the Province of Asia. It may have been attended with severe physical labor in quarries, amid hard surroundings, resembling the conditions that faced some of the refined Russian patriots and writers formerly exiled to Siberia. He was cut off from the life of the mainland, and the moderate measure of Greek feeling which he had acquired since coming to Ephesus fell away from him. While he was shut up to his own meditations from about 90 to 96 A.D., the visions forming the Book of Revelation were gradually unfolded to his burning heart, musing on the situation of the Church as menaced by the might of Rome. We are to think of Bunyan composing his wonderful *Pilgrim's Progress* in Bedford jail as the nearest parallel to St. John writing the Apocalypse during his years in Patmos. He is like an impassioned and absorbed Hebrew seer during this exile period. Next, we may think of him as coming back to Ephesus, and going out among the churches of the province of Asia as the field in which the Apocalypse had first been circulated. Not only the difference in the Apocalypse of John and his Gospel as literary forms far

¹See Map, page 132 of this text-book.

apart in style, but the contrast between his "tribulation" (Rev. 1:9) on Patmos and his sense of relief at Ephesus may explain why they appear to vary so greatly as compositions. Then we may picture the apostle about 97 A.D., in the calmer atmosphere of Ephesus, but with the spell of his exile still upon him, as producing the Fourth Gospel. Says Ramsay: "In no other way could man rise to that superhuman level on which the Fourth Gospel is pitched, and be able to gaze with steady unwavering eyes on the eternal and the divine and to remain so unconscious of the ephemeral world."¹ Somewhat later, perhaps about 98 A.D., John wrote his first Epistle, which proved to be the book of Scripture latest in date of writing.

The Living Christ To John on the rocky isle of Patmos in profound meditation till he is rapt in vision, appears his faithful Leader and Lord as the living Christ: "I am . . . the living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:17, 18). May we not believe that, if the needs of the imperiled early Church required at a certain point the living Christ from the glory personally to appear to Paul, the need was equally great for him to appear to John on Patmos? "I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet" (Rev. 1:10) recorded of Jesus by John is like "I heard a voice saying unto me" (Acts 26:14) related of his Lord by Paul.

¹The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia, 89.

The Christ of Power

The Apocalypse reveals the Christ of power. Men like H. G. Wells in their religious speculation see only the side of Christ representing gentleness and endurance, that writer saying: "The accepted figure of Jesus, instinct with meek submission, is not in the tone of our worship."¹ But even in the Gospels Christ is shown as driving the traders out of the temple (John 2:14-16), denouncing the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23:13-36), saying that he could have more than twelve legions of angels for his protection (Matt. 26:52), and that all authority was given unto him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

The Christ of Judgment

St. John, though practically a prisoner on Patmos, could read in the onward movement of Christ, the absolute judgment, condemnation, and destruction of Roman power. The situation nearest like it in history is Cardinal Mercier of Belgium throughout the German occupation defying his country's foes, asserting that right would overthrow their might, and that Belgium's day of deliverance would come. In the very midst of the war, on Belgium's national independence day, July 31, 1916, with the enemy's armored cars patrolling the streets to instil fear into the people's minds, he said publicly: "The hour of our deliverance draws near, but has not yet struck. Let not our courage falter."² At the close of 1917, perhaps the darkest hour of the whole awful struggle, he wrote to the German governor-general in

¹God the Invisible King, 101.

²Cardinal Mercier's Own Story (1921), 237.

Brussels: "We will wait in patience for the day of retaliation, not retaliation on this earth, however; that we have already, for the occupation regime you have forced upon us is abhorred by everybody in the world who has any sense of honor. I speak of the verdict of history; I speak of the inevitable judgment of the God of justice."¹ Thus we can see how spirit in John speaks throughout the whole body of the Book of Revelation saying that Jesus was even then judging force, as represented in imperial Rome, and that the tyrannous and godless empire would go down before him who is "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). And presently the hour came when Julian the emperor cried, "Galilean, thou hast conquered"; and the hour came when the German brutal force trailed in shame out of Belgium.

[3]

3. Marks of a Faithful and a Failing Church

Christ's Care for the Church In every part of the New Testament appears the glowing proof of Christ's cherishing love and unceasing care for his Church. In the Gospels gleam the words, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18); in the Acts every disciple and agency continuously enlarges it; in the Epistles shines the Saviour's ideal, "Not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5:27). The Apocalypse is simply the unveiling of Christ's purpose to make his bride the Church triumph

¹Cardinal Mercier's Own Story, 344.



ASIAN CITIES AND PATMOS, SHOWING JOURNEYS OF THE APOCALYPSE

over every form of opposition. His Church participates with him in his warfare with sin and evil, being indeed the effective medium through which final victory must be won. In the searching manner of the prophets John, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, pictures Christ as walking among the seven churches as a general might walk along the ranks of his soldiers before leading them forth to battle, noting where they are strong and ready and where they are lacking.

Basis of**Knowledge**

The seven churches were chosen apparently because they could best serve as distributing points to reach others with copies of the Apocalypse of John. They lay along a regular route going from Ephesus north to Pergamum, southeast to Laodicea, and then west to Ephesus.¹ The first message or letter is to the church at Ephesus, the chief city of the province, where St. John resided (Rev. 2:1-7). Smyrna and Philadelphia alone of the seven cities still stand. These churches were wholly commended (Rev. 2:8-10; 3:7-13). Pergamum, "where Satan's throne is," was the chief seat of emperor-worship (Rev. 2:12-17). Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) was a small city until after the Roman period had begun; then it rapidly became great and rich. Destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D., it disdained on account of its wealth to seek help from the emperor in rebuilding, as many of the greatest cities of Asia had done. Its main trade was in garments made from the beautiful glossy black wool of its sheep. A remedy called "Phrygian Powder," for weakness of eyes, was probably prepared there. Point by point John's accurate knowledge lies back of the items of Rev. 3:17, 18.

**Churches True
or Wanting**

What does the Supreme Leader wish to find in the companies of his army called churches? Fervent and unwavering fidelity, endurance and patience; freedom from false teachers and lax standards and doctrines; willingness to suffer and if needs be to die for the

¹See Sections 1-7 of Map, page 132, of this text-book, and also Sections a, b, and c, showing John's possible routes to and from Patmos.

name of Christ; entering the doors that he opens and doing his works. They fail and are found wanting when they lose their first intense, undivided love for their Lord and become lukewarm, self-sufficient, worldly, weak, cowardly, or even corrupt in faith and life. Writers on the Apocalypse, such as Seiss, Swete, Terry, Milligan, Charles, and Beckwith, recognize that the combined message here given to the seven churches sounds forth its vital notes to all churches to, the end of time, and the last-named author also observes: "The warnings and promises of the seven epistles touch practically the daily individual life in a wide round of perils and duties."¹

[4]

4. Types of Gigantic Powers of Evil

**Figures as in
a Drama**

As we come now to the apocalyptic part of the Book of Revelation, extending from chapter four to verse five of chapter twenty-two, we are to think of St. John as presenting the shock and clash and warring of living agents and giant forces on either side of a long-drawn-out contest, ending at last in the complete triumph of good as represented by the people of God or the Church. God the Father, Christ the Son as the Lamb, suggestive of his sacrifice, or as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, referring to his exaltation and regal authority, angelic hosts, companies of the redeemed either still on earth or in heaven, have joined with them typical forces or objects on the side of good.

¹Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 309.

Their direct action will be indicated chiefly in the next section of this chapter.¹ They are mentioned here because the movement of the Apocalypse resembles that of a drama or a vast living panorama, and the figures on one side cannot be shown without bringing in those on the other. In the end Satan is revealed as leader or the most representative of all the evil agents, but in the early stages of the conflict other enemies of good are more prominent.

The Beast Doubtless the figure that stands out most vividly of all the evil agents shown in the Apocalypse is the one called the beast, whose action runs more or less steadily through chapters thirteen to nineteen inclusive. With reason he is the outstanding evil figure, for he typifies the Roman empire, especially as headed up in the emperors—the arch foe of the early Church at this period, whose cruel, persecuting hand had grievously struck St. John himself. Among some of the significant things said about the beast is that “the dragon [the devil] gave him his power” (Rev. 13:2); that “his number is Six hundred and sixty and six”² (Rev. 13:18); and that the saints in heaven “come off victorious from the beast” (Rev. 15:2).

**The Second Beast
or the
False Prophet**

In close connection with the beast just described there is an agent of evil called “another beast” (Rev. 13:1). After he is thus

¹See pages 137-141 of this text-book.

²The numerical value of **Nero Cæsar** in Hebrew letters; the idea of Nero revived being current at that time, and this cryptic number 666 probably signifying Nero come again as Antichrist in the emperor Domitian. See Beckwith, *Apocalypse of John* 400-406.

introduced he is thenceforward called "the false prophet."¹ It seems to be his part to present to Christ's disciples very adroitly and with subtle appeal to their self-interest the demand that they "worship the first beast."² This points clearly to the priesthood or special Roman officials whose part it was to maintain and extend emperor-worship. St. John very likely personally saw their influence at work trying to break down the scruples of members of his flock in such cities as Ephesus and Pergamum.

**The Tempting Woman
and the
Mystic Babylon**

Under these two types, which largely dominate chapters seventeen and eighteen, the seer presents the imperial city of Rome, the motive for her portrayal appearing chiefly in the words: "I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:6). The woman rides upon the beast, implying that the imperial city is sustained by the largesses and exactions from many peoples poured into her lap by the emperors. The beast's trappings here are scarlet, in keeping with the woman's purple and scarlet raiment, her surfeit of jewels, her golden cup brimming with abominable enticements. She flaunts her name, Babylon, and her profession (Rev. 17:3-5). All the coarse, brutal luxury and intoxicating wickedness of ancient pagan Rome, resting at the bottom on cruelty that fed Christians to the lions, seeps out of these

¹Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10.

²See the entire passage, Rev. 13:10-17.

verses. Then in chapter eighteen is the prolonged tragedy of her overthrow, burning, wasting, and desolation. The picture is not prediction: it is moral judgment. God must and will destroy Rome for her sins. John's intuitive sense of her certain doom became history in a few centuries.

The Devil or Satan The only other evil agent whose place in the Apocalypse must be sketched is the devil. He is seen working behind and through all the others that have been named. He begins earliest and fights longest. Five different terms¹ are applied to him, and he is seen to be busy in four out of the seven cities or churches to which the letters were sent.² But in chapter twelve the real contest between Christ and this great adversary is traced back to its origin even in heaven; and not till the tenth verse of the twentieth chapter is he shown as finally taken in hand and disposed of forever.

[5]

5. Resources of Good for the Defeat of Evil

Triumph Anticipated The Revelation is a book of cheer, a Tract for Bad Times—an accepted definition of an apocalypse. The outlook may be dark for the thin line, the scattered groups, the single combatants that make up the militant Church below; but every time the Revelator draws aside the veil we see the serried ranks of the martyrs and re-

¹"Dragon," "serpent," "devil," "Satan," "accuser," (Rev. 12:9, 10).

²Rev. 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9.

deemed spirits, symmetrical and symbolic formations like the hundred and forty-four thousand (Rev. 7:4-8; 14:1-5), vast companies that no man can number, mighty angelic choirs led and regimented by "living creatures" and "elders" in the throne-room of the Eternal; and our ears are greeted with choral outbursts and responses, with song recitatives and chants, accompanying the movements of what Davidson has called "the drama of Christianity," which show there is no uncertainty in the unseen realm as to the outcome. The result of every onset upon evil is anticipated; praise in heaven means adequate power on earth. These wonderful passages in the Apocalypse have been taken up by our great musical composers and given highest places of honor in their creations, and are thus made familiar to us; but consider what they must have meant to the Church of John's time, in the early dawn of hymnic literature:

Great and marvelous are thy works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true thy ways,
Thou King of the ages.¹

**In This
Sign Conquer**

The book is called "The Revelation of John," but it opens with the words: "The revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1), and from first to last Christ is exalted. It traces all the resources by which sin and evil are overcome to his redeeming work. No episode

¹Rev. 15:3.

of the Apocalypse is more impressive than the one given in chapter five, which centers around the sealed book. At last the Lion of the tribe of Judah proves to be the only being worthy to break the seals and to open the book which Beckwith conceives held "the supreme decrees of the divine will" concerning the consummation of the kingdom.¹ Not till Christ is seen "a Lamb standing as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6) does he advance and take the book, assuming the full right to open it. Then it is that in the different parts of the grand antiphonal anthem with which the episode closes Christ is celebrated as the one that has been slain and has purchased the redeemed by his blood. This henceforth is the key-note of victory. The saints overcome the evil one "because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony," as having experienced his transforming power (Rev. 12:11). The innumerable host of the saved in heaven have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14; 22:14).

Issue Long Deferred The Apocalypse conveys the impression that, while the overthrow of evil is sure, the process of subduing it passes through many stages and phases and is tremendously difficult. Evil assumes protean forms and has a fearful power of recrudescence. The contest exacts terrible reprisals of pain and death from the good. In his lectures on the Apocalypse Dr. William Milligan

¹The Apocalypse of John, 262.

says: "Throughout the whole book we deal with conflict, with armies, with battles, with the war-horse and blood, with a mighty struggle between good and evil, Christ and the devil. It appears to be the idea of St. John that, in the case of every true follower of Christ, conflict leads to martyrdom. He knew of no Christianity that does not, in one way or another, conduct the believer through tears and blood, through suffering and the cross, to the heavenly reward."¹ Still, after eighteen centuries, evil has great power and many lives are laid down, there being over thirty thousand Christian martyrs in China in the Boxer uprising, and perhaps now a million lives surrendered "for the Name" (Acts 5:41) in the martyr nation of the Armenians during and since the World War. Referring to this, Beckwith observes: "Perhaps in no event since the age in which the Apocalypse was written has the essential character of its great conflict been more nearly paralleled than in the World War of the present century, the most gigantic struggle between righteousness and governmental iniquity known to history."²

[6]

Breaking of Satan's Power

When it is said, near the close of the Apocalypse, that an angel bound the devil "for a thousand years," and then Satan is pictured at the close of this period as loosed "for a little time" (Rev. 20:1-7), these num-

¹The Revelation of St. John, 167-169 (condensed).

²The Apocalypse of John, 308.

bers are considered by Dr. Milligan to be symbolic, the language of apocalypse. Christ's saving offering had power in it to restrain Satan completely, for he was "manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). This is the meaning of the symbol of a thousand years. "He is a bruised and conquered foe. Their true life is beyond his reach. They live already a resurrection life. No sooner was Satan, as regarded the *saints*, completely bound than, as regards *the world*, he was loosed; and from that hour, through the whole past history of Christianity, he has been stirring up the world against the Church."¹ But, however long the contest lasts, evil is at last utterly overmatched, and there is really no battle when the divine forces move to end the work of the adversary, which may have been permitted as a means of discipline of Christ's followers. When God so wills, Satan's career instantly ends. "With the close of chapter twenty, the last word has been spoken concerning the doom of evil. Every last vestige of it has been destroyed."²

6. The City Symbolic of Victory and Peace

The Apocalypse a Panorama

The Apocalypse has been called a drama, but a closer analogy is a panorama or cyclorama. In a panorama you enter by an enclosed passageway and find yourself on a mound or platform in the middle of a

¹The Revelation of St. John, 220-222 (condensed).

²Raymond Calkins, The Social Message of the Book of Revelation, 144.

circular picture perhaps a hundred feet away from you in whatever direction you look. Actual bushes, stumps, rocks, trees, fences, shocks of corn, or other objects begin at the foot of the mound and lead the eye to the canvas, and the illusion is complete: you feel that you are gazing from a point of vantage upon a far-stretching scene, perhaps the battlefield of Gettysburg. If now by a battery of moving pictures from all directions on the outside every part of the panorama was filled with life and movement there would be a close likeness to the body of this remarkable book. The Prologue or introductory approach in chapter one and the Epilogue (Rev. 22:6-21) correspond to the zone of mingled realty and picture leading to the great circular screen. What you gaze upon on the screen is the Apocalypse proper. It is not prediction and it is not history. For centuries men have sought to make it a combination of these two, and the result is almost nil. Count it a moving panorama, and at once it opens itself to your mind and speaks its message; for a picture may be more impressive than realty, and poetry may carry more inspiration than does history. R. H. Charles calls the Apocalypse "emphatically a Book of Songs," and says in his voluminous work, "I have sought to recover the poetical form in which the seer wrote so large a part of it."¹

The Consummation

Let us now be prepared to reckon the passage describing the general judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) not prediction

¹The Revelation of St. John (1920), Vol. I, xiv.

or exact history to be, but the artistic closing of the screen entitled "Judgments of God." Finally, let us accept the whole scene of "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:1-22:5) not as a description of the eternal abode of God and the good, but a screen which interprets the consummation that God plans for the Church on earth. Philip Whitwell Wilson, the keen, high-souled journalist from Great Britain, while resident in the United States and interpreting American opinion for his English readers in the London *Daily News*, found time to write three remarkable books, and in the last one says, as he links up almost every sentence and phrase of the Apocalypse with the present life of the world: "There is a company who belong to the Lamb. These soldiers of the cross are free—called, not compelled. They are faithful to their oath. There is to be a definite distinction drawn between the customs and aims of those who take upon them the name of Christ and others who do not. It may be in the form of an avoidance of pleasures which are open to the multitude, like the dance, drink, and the drama. It may mean the performance of tasks which are evaded by the multitude, like missionary and social duties. It is a deeper difference than any detail, like card-playing or racing. The good in Christ is to be ultimately universal—the city of God upon the earth. A step or two onward, and we shall see before us, no longer the perplexities of the past, but the noble outlines of the New Jerusalem, the

holy city of God."¹ But if the city of God here can answer to this picture of victory and peace, when the power of evil has ended, what will be its completion in the future heaven of God?

[7]

7. The Bride Symbolic of Purity, Love, and Fidelity

Christ's Own Says Milligan: "The New Jerusalem, though described as a city, is really the redeemed themselves. It is 'the bride, the wife of the Lamb' (Rev. 21:9). We have essentially a picture, not of the future, but of the present. The picture may not yet be realized in fulness; but every blessing lined in upon its canvas is in principle the believer's now. It is the heritage of the children of God at the very time when they are struggling with the world."²

Purity The trait that stands out most clearly in John's portraiture of the bride is her purity. Whatsoever can in anywise defile is excluded from the symbolic city (Rev. 21:27).

Love and Fidelity H. F. Waring observes: "The power of the Christian life is the power of love. Of all the Christian graces love is queen. Love was the secret of the wondrous power of Chris-

¹The Vision We Forget (1921), 216-244 (condensed).

²Expositor's Bible (Rev.) 368-374 (condensed).

tianity in the early centuries of its history. Love is the secret of its truest success to-day. In its pure and joyous spirit of loving sacrifice for others is its greatest difference from other religions.”¹ The fidelity of the body of those who are Christ’s own can be read in the final “overcome” of this book,² in the full register of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12) and of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Rev. 21:14), showing that not one of the representative elements is lacking, and in the freedom from all insincerity and deception (Rev. 22:15).

The One Clear Aim Much as some of us would rejoice in the immediate bodily return or reappearing of our Lord, if it were his purpose so to appear, we do not find in our most careful study of the Book of Revelation that it was intended to give light on that event. Its direct purpose was to put new heart into the persecuted Church of St. John’s day by presenting before the Christian disciples wonderful pictures of how God and Christ purposed to defeat evil, to overcome opposition, to destroy the works of the devil, and that this purpose would surely be accomplished. This truth then remains for every age in the measure that it is needed. The truth as to Christ’s second advent is to be learned from other parts of the Scriptures where it is directly taught. Other subjects, such as the character of a true church,

¹Christianity and Its Bible, 281.

²Rev. 21:7. See also Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.

personal Christian character, God's standards of judgment, the nature of the final society of the redeemed, receive valuable side-lights in the Apocalypse, but its main purpose is to inspire hope, courage, and immovable steadfastness even unto death in every follower of Jesus Christ.

Suggestive Questions

1. Give the two meanings of the word Revelation.
2. Why is it thought that the period of Domitian better fits the features of the Apocalypse than that of Vespasian?
3. Fix in mind the general order in time of the production of the three main Johannine writings.
4. Seek to put down in writing three reasons why the book of Revelation and the Fourth Gospel differ so widely as compositions.
5. Note two evidences drawn from the books themselves tending to prove that they have the same author.
- 6.* Why should there be a Scriptural assurance given us of Christ's power, to be put alongside the aspects of meekness and gentleness largely given in the Gospels?
- 7.* Seek to determine the best three marks of a faithful church, and then of a failing church.
- 8.* What things most threateningly imperil the true Church to-day?
- 9.* What are the most effective resources against evil now entrusted to us?
- 10.* What proof can you draw from other parts of the Bible and from the passage itself that the last two chapters of the book of Revelation relate to a state of the Church on earth?

DIVINE TRUTH IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

1. John Unfolds the Heart and the Highest of Divine Truth
2. God is Known Through His Nature
3. Christ the Son Manifests the Father
4. The Holy Spirit is the Imparter of Divine Truth
5. Christians are Born Children of God
6. Eternal Life is Our Life Now and Evermore Renewed
7. Heaven is Our Home of Unending Fellowship

DAILY READINGS

- [1] John 13:21-26; Rev. 22:6-9
- [2] 1 John 4:1-14
- [3] John 12:20-33
- [4] John 16:12-33
- [5] John 1:1-18
- [6] 1 John 3:1-12
- [7] John 14:1-4

CHAPTER VIII

DIVINE TRUTH IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

[1]

1. John Unfolds the Heart and the Highest of Divine Truth

Central in Life

As the heart is central among vitalizing forces of the body, so John in his writings represents the inmost heart in the communication of life-giving truth which God supplies to the world in the Bible. Says Dr. Rufus M. Jones: "In the Fourth Gospel and the first Epistle of John we have a religion the central idea of which is a divine birth within—human life fed from within with the life of God. Man enters into life, or has life in him, only as he partakes of God."¹

John's Supreme Service

From early Christian times it has been recognized that John's personality was one that fitted him to be the last through whom divine truth should find expression. In the order of God's works the latest is the highest, the freest from the ephemeral and the accidental, from the limitations of time and place, from the fetters of traditions, rites, and ceremonies. Pre-eminently John in his nature, experience, and ideal

¹Studies in Mystical Religion, 16-8 (condensed).

or passion of soul was the prepared and predestined human channel through which the long course of revelation could be brought to a glorious conclusion. All his writings, even including the Apocalypse, as we have just seen, are almost independent of date and environment. Notably true is it that his Gospel and first Epistle are so lifted to the realm of the inner life of the spirit, and deal so constantly with the eternal verities of the relations of God and man that the author might come from any land, any race, any era of history, and his origin be a matter of indifference. It follows, then, that he speaks to every land, every race, every era with a clearness and directness that belong to no other Biblical writer. His unfoldings to us of God's thought are contemporaneous with every age, and he speaks more universally to the heart of all mankind than does any other Biblical author.

[2]

2. God is Known Through His Nature

**God as Spirit in
Some Degree Unknown**

In the mode of his existence God is spirit; and as long as we are in our present mode of body joined with spirit it is not possible for us directly to see him. So John says: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). But, because God is omnipresent spirit, he can meet the worshiper in any place where,

outreaching, he finds those who worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23).

God as Light

When John in thought reaches the realm where the love nature of God operates he no longer finds any barrier to the approach of any seeking soul. "Light and love are synonyms," says Dr. George B. Stevens, as he seeks to give the essence of the terms John uses.¹ This careful student does not lay any marked stress on the ideas that "light" in John's writings points toward love in action or toward holiness, but is simply a manifestation of life and love. "He that loves is dwelling and walking in the light." Now John says that "God is light and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

Distinct from Paul

When we see the words of Paul: "Having foreordained us into adoption as sons . . . according to the good pleasure of his will, . . . making known unto us the mystery of his will, . . . the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11); or again the words: "So then he hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18), we recognize that, however we may explain these words of Paul, the words of John take us much more directly into the absolute ground of our salvation in the nature of God as light or love, rather than placing it in the mystery of God's will.

God as Love

With John the darkness, the difficulties, hedging up God's pathway, as he

¹The Johannine Theology, 5.

moves toward human redemption, can largely be felt to have disappeared. Love in God is not something that is conditional on the action of the divine will, but is absolutely essential and constituent in God's very being. God is love, and therefore love comes forth from him like light from a luminous body, and this light of redeeming love in Christ "lighteth every man coming into the world" (John 1:9). It then creates or begets new life in those who "receive" it by an act of will, taking it by faith. In John the mystery of will is transferred from God to man (John 7:17), and he is peculiarly the apostle of those who believe in free grace and free will. Is there not also the higher unity where all Biblical writers, and where the true elements of the predestinarian and the Arminian types of belief are harmonized?

[3]

3. Christ the Son Manifests the Father

John's Wonderful Treasure

John opens both his Gospel and his first Epistle as if he would unveil at once his greatest treasure: "The Word became flesh . . . and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14); "The Word . . . was manifested, . . . the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:1, 2). The Word here is the Logos, and J. A. Robertson makes this observation: "St. John seizes upon the great thought-solvent of his day, the Logos—the Divine Reason which

comprises the whole cosmos within its own essence. No lower conception than this, the highest so far reached by man, is adequate to express the eternal significance of Christ."¹ Writing on the same revealing idea Dr. G. P. Eckman says: "The Word of God! What a perfect title for the Son of God. In Christ God has uttered himself—the long silence has been broken—God has become vocal."² Browning gives these strong lines:

I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.³

The Name Jesus revealed God as Father, using this
Father name in the Fourth Gospel one hundred and eighteen times. It occurs sixteen times in the first and second Epistles of John. It is found six times in Christ's wonderful closing prayer in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, there being one "Holy Father" (John 17:11), and one "Righteous Father" (John 17:25). Then the deep spirit of Christ's mission as manifesting the heart of God breaks into the petitions: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ. I glorified thee on earth having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I manifested thy name unto

¹The Gospel and the Epistles of St. John, 24, 25.

²Studies in the Gospel of John, Part II, 31, 37 (condensed).

³From "A Death in the Desert."

the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word. Now they know that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are from thee: for the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them, and knew of a truth that I came forth from thee, and they believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:3-8).

**The Father's
Redeeming Love**

Sometimes the soul's vision is awakened by an incident not in itself startling. Apparently the world's history took a new direction when young Lincoln saw the slave auction in New Orleans and said: "If ever I get a chance to hit that thing, I will hit it hard." So, when a few Greeks among the passover pilgrims at Jerusalem came to Philip saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus" (John 12:21), and this request was conveyed to our Lord, it appears to have opened to the soul of the Christ a vision of the innumerable hosts of all races, climes, and centuries who would come, and he saw immediately that the precious grain of wheat of his life must first die to secure that harvest, and a little later there came the triumphant words, "Father, glorify thy name," and then the answer from heaven, "I have both glorified it [in Christ's life] and will glorify it again" [in his death and resurrection.] At once the Saviour claims the fruits of what he sees: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself"

(John 12:24-32). Both in the crushing of evil and in the conserving of good he sees the victory of the cross.

[4]

4. The Holy Spirit is the Imparter of Divine Truth

The Spirit of Truth

The operations of the Holy Spirit, as unfolded by John, have already been presented at some length,¹ when in Chapter

V he was shown to be Convincer and Witness, Teacher and Guide, Illuminator, and also Comforter. Divine truth is the chief means employed by the Spirit in all that rich cluster of his ministrations. But other means through which the Spirit can work in all those offices will be recognized at once when we think of the natural crises in our experience of life, startling providences, the influence of friends, sermons, and books other than the Bible, and the most intimate appeals to us of the realms of science, art, and God's great "out-of-doors." In the chapters covering the closing discourses in the Fourth Gospel the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13); and at the last reference our Lord says of the Spirit; "He shall guide you into all the truth." In the intercessory prayer Christ, in addressing the Father affirms: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). By this clear pathway we are led to an understanding of the work of the Spirit in connection with God's written revelation; and

¹See pages 91-94 of this text-book.

in passages outside of John's writings there are confirming statements, like this one: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Imparting the Truth Our next step now seems plain: The Spirit who has been so constantly operative in producing divine truth that he is called repeatedly by Christ "The Spirit of truth" can impart the truth. He is to be depended upon by all those who seek to gain a knowledge of divine truth. Let this become a practical working principle in all Bible study, and in all ventures of Christian aspiration toward greater fulness of life and power, and all enterprises of daring in spiritual service. The Spirit's revealed standards in the Word of God are ever to be the tests of normalcy and soundness in character, and health and progress in achievement. The Spirit is the imparter of truth for your religious hopes and beliefs; for your impressions, judgments, and leadings; for your life program and your everyday conduct; for your passion for sanctity and Christ-likeness; for your self-forgetting ambitions and dreams of devotion and holy intercessions; for your drives and campaigns for ethical and religious reconstruction. A writer of remarkable insight combined with keen research has shown that several times since the days of the early Church circles seeking relief from a decadent, worldly, or persecuting period in the general Church have discovered what seemed to them a new age of the Holy Spirit, and were led to

claim that the Spirit imparted inner life and truth to them that made them superior to the Bible and even to Christ or his dispensation. The first notable group among these were the Montanists, about 200 A.D., in the region of Carthage. Other later companies at the middle of the thirteenth century in Italy and the middle of the sixteenth century in England have been called "Spirituals" from their counting that they inaugurated a special dispensation of the Holy Spirit. The weakness of such movements is in not testing their ideas by the Spirit-imparted truth in the Bible, instead of regarding themselves as having advanced beyond it. Let us seek to be open to all that the Holy Spirit would impart, but know that the safe path is "By the Spirit through the Word."

[5]

5. Christians are Born Children of God

A New Life or Nature

John is very explicit, consistent, and clear in holding that when we come into right relation with God we receive a new life or nature. He has kept for us the words of Christ to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). John's carefully chosen words in the Prologue gradually close us in with the essential truth—we are "born . . . of God." The apostle says of Christ: "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of

God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13). Westcott, a notable name for his illuminating comments, says of the three clauses near the end of the passage: "The new birth is not brought about by *descent*, by *desire*, or by *human power*." Just as precisely as it is possible to say it, John means to say that Christians have a life or nature derived from nothing other than the nature of God.

Begotten Children

The word in the above passage rendered "born" means literally "begotten," and this word and the phrase "begotten of God" occurs again and again in John's first Epistle.¹ John appears to have taken the idea into his heart because it enfolds within it the closeness of our relation as Christians to God. Still more fully does his use of the word "children" instead of "sons" fill out his splendid grasp of a divine truth. Making no attempt to reproduce the Greek words for "child" and "son," we may still see the force of Dr. M. R. Vincent's distinction between John and Paul in their use of these words. "*Child* denotes a relation based on community of *nature*, while *son* may indicate only *adoption* and *heirship*. Except in Rev. 21:7, which is a quotation, John never uses *son* to describe the relation of Christians to God, since he regards their position not as a result of *adoption*, but of *life*. Paul, on the other hand, regards the relation from the legal

¹ 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18.

standpoint, as adoption, imparting a new dignity.”¹ Thus, in John’s view, we are not adopted children but “begotten children” of God, in accordance with the bent of his genius, in penetrating to the very core of things and keeping his thought fixed on reality. Therefore he triumphantly exclaims: “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are” (1 John 3:1). The searching question for every one called Christian must now be: Can the very life and traits of God be seen as “second nature” in me? “To be born of God means to receive from him a communication of spiritual life whereby the soul is more and more transformed into Christlikeness.”² Christ is the only begotten *Son*:³ we are the begotten *children* of God.

[6]

6. Eternal Life is Our Life Now and Evermore Renewed

The Rivulets and the River

Whence is the Amazon as it moves on majestically in its lower courses? It is composed of multitudinous rivulets that gather far back from mountain and forest and pour their mingled waters into its mighty current; yea, the ultimate source of every mountain rill is the ocean into which the Amazon flows. So it may be that the lives of all the children

¹Word Studies in the New Testament, Vol. II, 49.

²Stevens, The Johannine Theology, 12.

³John 1:18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9.

of God out of all the ages merge at last to make the "river of water of life" (Rev. 22:1), which first proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, because the regnant purpose of the Father and the Son in the far reaches of redemption has fed these rivulets with the dews and the rains and the snow crystals of heavenly grace. Professor Stevens gives us a further statement of profound insight concerning John, when he says: "He blends the religious life in this world with the eternal spiritual order. By his conception of eternal life as a present possession he unites this world with the world to come. Heaven and earth are near together and that which separates them is not death, but sin."¹

Life Continuously Sustained

Our new life, which is the beginning of eternal life, is not like a material thing once for all bestowed, but like the relation of the branch to the vine, a life continuously sustained by its connection with the life-giving source. Perhaps the closest statement of the vital elements is seen in these words: "God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John 5:11, 12). It is striking, not to say startling, that men's deepest thought as to how the universe is sustained in being has come around to a similar idea, so that Bergson holds that God is incessant life, action, liberty, and is the center from which the reality of the universe is

¹The Johannine Theology, 13, 14.

continually leaping forth.¹ In Christ's intercessory prayer these words are found: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). Of course, this is a heart knowledge, the result of faith. Aylmer Maude records this utterance of Tolstoi: "I only lived at those times when I believed in God . . . He is that without which one cannot live. To know God and to live is one and the same thing"²

An Ethical and Holy Life

So vivid and flaming is the sense in St. John that the life of the child of God is morally apart from the sinful world and filled with brotherly love and all Christ-like virtues that we find it hard to understand his absolute and unqualified assertions: "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6, 7). This first absolute statement John does guard in the next three verses lest it lead to the claim that we have not sinned or that we have attained a sinless perfection. So the later statements: "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and "Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin" (1 John 3:6, 9), must assure that the Christian ever aspires and approaches to full victory over sin. As Professor Charles F. Sitterly says: "He cannot or does not now normally, nor at all wilfully sin, so sin is only an excep-

¹E. W. Lyman, *The Experience of God in Modern Life* (1918), 122, 123.

²*Life of Tolstoi*, Vol. I, 417.

tional or abnormal and vanishing thing; it is overcome and cast out." Moreover, the believer's life is not negative but positive—a life strong, rich, abundant, for he is walking in truth, light, love, as his native element.

[7]

7. Heaven is Our Home of Unending Fellowship

**Ye Also Where
I Am**

There can be seen throughout the Gospel of John, from the first attraction to Christ of some of his apostles at the Jordan (John 1:35-42) to his intercourse with the breakfast group at the close (John 21:1-23) and especially during the last supper and the discourses and prayer following (John chs. 13-17), that a true spirit of fellowship existed between Christ and the men whom he trained to carry forward his work when he should no longer be with them. No words guarantee the future heaven to Christ's own so fully as his personal assurance when he says to these chosen men, in the midst of this sacred evening: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2, 3). The splendid and burning point of what he promises is that he goes to prepare a place that they may also be where he is. But why must they be where he is? Simply for one purpose, namely, that the fellowship

which is now broken by his going away may be renewed. Fellowship is the loving intercourse or communion of persons. Therefore our Saviour here gives the assurance of the survival beyond death of human personality, than which few subjects at this time are of more profound interest among thoughtful people. G. G. Finlay shows that fellowship is also the key to John.

Attunement of Soul

Christ will be the key to which souls are attuned to be capable of the unending fellowship of heaven. "We shall be like him," says John; "for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2). There are times on earth when all we need is a sense that another soul does vibrate along with us to the Christ-note. Dr. W. T. Grenfell, in unfolding the thought, "What Christian Fellowship Means to Me," describes how in a meeting, just after his conversion as a young man, the call came for Christians to rise. He sat among college mates and felt glued to his seat. To volunteer as did Hobson at Santiago for the post of being blown up would be easy compared to the test that faced him. Just then from a long row of sailor boys, all dressed alike in the uniform of the training ship, one boy stood up. "My chains were broken," says the man we now know as the Labrador hero, "and I got up, a step I can never be sufficiently grateful for, no, not to my dying day. The fellowship of the boy's courage had meant everything to me."¹ We may believe that in

¹A Man's Helpers, 70-72.

the measure in which soul is attuned to soul both here and hereafter will be the actual fellowship of those who go forward in the life of the heavenly world. Each personality will be absolutely free to form the fellowships of that world in accordance with the needs and tendencies of the nature. Doubtless some fellowships of earth are so strong as to survive any possible adjustments of heaven. These are most deeply grounded in the love and will of God; for here also John says: "Love is of God" (1 John 4:7), and "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 3:17).

Suggestive Questions

1.* How can you illustrate the point that in the order of God's works the latest is the highest?

2. How do you harmonize the Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), with John's statement, "No man hath seen God at any time" (John 1:18)?

3.* Seek to have a clear understanding of the Arminian type of belief, and how it differs from the Calvinistic or predestinarian type.

4.* Can you see reasons why John should use the Logos idea for Christ?

5.* Is there some single word to be preferred to "Interpreter" as expressing how John as a whole pictures that the Holy Spirit ministers divine truth?

6.* What are possible dangers in overemphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit?

7.* What idea or figure in the Bible would you place next to the filial relation to indicate the Christian's new connection with God?

8. Suggest some other symbol than the branch and the vine to represent the sustained new life of the believer.

9.* What terms appear to express for you the highest possible Christian life?

10.* Give two other terms besides fellowship to embody your conception of the heavenly life.

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